THE MEN OF SILENCE

By LOUIS FORGIONE

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THE MEN OF SILENCE

The
MEN *of* SILENCE

By

LOUIS FORGIONE

Author of "Reamer Lou," "The River Between," etc.

With an introduction

BY

WALTER LITTLEFIELD

E. P. DUTTON & CO., INC.

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A FOREWORD

By Walter Littlefield, Officer of the Crown of Italy

Since the episodes related in the following pages took place a new Italy has dawned—an Italy of discipline, work and national self-respect—and a regenerate Naples. Throughout the Peninsula the dear, old *dolce far niente* has vanished with the inspiration for organized opposition to law and order—has vanished the internal political life which, dormant during the national exigencies of the World War, suddenly revived to make Italy the contempt of the Paris Peace Conference.

None of the other European powers which assembled there wanted her to emerge as of the first class, least of all, as dominating the Mediterranean. So her representatives returned to Rome with her prestige diminished and almost as empty-handed as their predecessors had from the Berlin Congress of 1878. In both cases Italy's weakness in international debate arose from a constitutional anomaly. In all constitutional monarchies save Italy parliamentary government has been forced upon the sovereign by revolution. In Italy it was the gift of the sovereign, who, however, still preserved the right to legislate conjointly with Parliament.

This unique preservation of a royal prerogative prevented a united national policy, save when danger threatened from without. At other times, as its pernicious influences worked down from Monarch to Minister, from Minister to Prefect, from Prefect to Mayor no very great amount of constructive legislation could be accomplished, while the execution and administration of what was enacted was either fashioned to suit the personal ambitions of politicians—sometimes worthy, it must be admitted—or to perpetuate the multiplicity of political parties, but almost never to the complete satisfaction of the body-politic.

In these circumstances organized delinquency which, in many cases, was the outgrowth of the politico-militant associations of the *Risorgimento* could not be permanently eradicated; its ramifications in the social and political structure were too secure; whenever an attempt was made to suppress it, root and branch, the application of law was usually so drastic as to bring recruits to the lawless and bind all more closely together.

Such, indeed, had been the results of successive, spasmodic attempts to deal with the banditti of the Apennines and of Sardinia, with the Sicilian Mafia and the Camorra of Naples under Parliamentary Italy, which owed its inception to the *Statuto fondamentale del Regno* gratuitously bestowed by King Carlo Alberto on his Sardinian subjects, March 4, 1848.

It is true that long before the advent of Fascismo the banditti of the dorsal ridge of Italy had practically disappeared, but this was due quite as much to a growing inimical environment as to the bullets of the Carabinieri. And only a vitalized public conscience with stimulating political ideals and with a continuance of work with food can make permanent the results of the somewhat spectacular methods by which the Mafia of Sicily and the banditti of Sardinia were apparently exterminated in 1927-28.

Was it different with the Camorra? Some explanation is necessary in order to determine whether Louis Forgione in drawing on the tragic and romantic annals of that institution as they were transcribed between June 5, 1906, and July 8, 1912, has merely added a dramatic chapter to the histories of Umilta and Blasio on the Camorra, of Alongi and Le Faure on the Mafia, of Pais-Serra and Sergi on the Sardinian banditti, or has graphically depicted the end of a politico-criminal Neapolitan epoch.

Although our author has not intruded upon the reader a mass of intimate historical background—quite incomprehensible to alien concepts—he has furnished sufficient data to reveal the Camorra (a Spanish word, probably brought to the prisons of Naples by transported *convidados*), from its beginnings as a philanthropic society among the imprisoned victims of Bourbon misrule in the old Kingdom of Naples, which when freed by the revolution of 1820 at once became a political auxiliary of

that same misrule and then, on the flight of the Bourbons and being left to its own devices, held sway for years as a monstrous Tammany until its political claws were clipped by the Honest Government League in 1901. Henceforth its life and object were entirely criminal but colored more or less with the romance and mysticism of the past and still owing its safety to powerful social and political protectors. And these protectors survived the trial at Viterbo but not the war, not the rise of Fascismo.

Fate, therefore, in the guise of subsequent history has permitted Mr. Forgione to write the end of an intensely interesting Neapolitan epoch as well as the actual obituary of the most fantastic and powerful criminal organization in the history of the world. Still, there were forces at work which, while being unable to veto the trial and conviction of the murderers of the Cuocolo couple, were influential enough to prevent the procedure from dealing a death blow to the organization itself. The evidence of Captain Fabbroni and of Maresciallo Farris implicating respectively the police and judiciary, politicians and officials at Rome, was excluded, and the trial so manoeuvered as to become the mere prosecution with ultimate conviction for a double murder of the three men who instigated it, of the five who executed their decree, of two for obstructing justice, and of one remarkable individual for attempting to divert suspicion and fasten the guilt on others. As to the remaining defendants the time they spent

in jail while awaiting trial quite discounted their brief sentences.

Possibly the most convincing proof of the legal "frame-up" against the prosecution is revealed by the cross-examination of Captain Fabbroni which took place between July 11 and 27, 1911. The witness had accused the leading lawyer for the defence, Avvocato Alessandro Lioy, of having himself pointed out the way to detection of the criminals by his articles in the *Roma* and *La Tribuna Giustiziaria*, and that Lioy had at first attacked his present clients because they would not pay and was now defending them because they would. The presiding judge, President Bianchi, thereupon warned Captain Fabbroni, to abstain from insinuations. To which the witness replied that he did not utter insinuations but facts of which he had full proof. In the uproar which followed the President suspended the sitting. On the following day when the Captain resumed the stand he was again warned to proceed with caution. "We are here to try alleged murderers, not a community," President Bianchi declared.

Captain Fabbroni: As I understand it, it is the desire of the Government to stamp out from the fair land of Naples the most powerful, the most remorseless body of criminals that the world has known. Am I right?

President Bianchi: Yes, but confine yourself to facts; do not try to indict a community.

Captain Fabbroni: But what if the community, with obvious exceptions, be guilty?

President Bianchi: That is impossible. Where would you lead us?

Captain Fabbroni: Where the guilty are.

President Bianchi: But where?

Captain Fabbroni: To the Chamber of Deputies. Aye, even to the Senate in Rome.

President Bianchi: I must stop all this. You go too far.

Captain Fabbroni: Did you stop those lawyers here when, day after day, they heaped insults upon the Reali Carabinieri and charged us with all sorts of crimes?

President Bianchi: That was another matter.

Captain Fabbroni: Yes, another matter, because they spoke lies and I am telling the truth. They attacked men who could not defend themselves. But I now defend them and return the attack. I am under orders and I am doing my duty.

President Bianchi: *I also have my orders.* This trial must be kept within the limits of the indictments.

Captain Fabbroni: But my orders are limitless and my duty is very simple. It is to execute them; there is nothing in them about sparing any one. I shall proceed.

Again the President of the Court warned the witness, again there was an uproar, again the sitting

was suspended; so the official coercion of the State witness continued until the end.

But this was not all. While the only evidence admitted concerned the murder of the Cuocolos, even that evidence was restricted to the circumstantial corroborated alone by the statement of Abbatemaggio, the informer. In the United States no indictment, much less a conviction could be secured on such evidence. Yet the Viterbo jury convicted simply because of their moral certainty of guilt. In the circumstances an appeal was a matter of course. But the *Corte di Cassazione*, evidently inspired by the same moral certainty which had convinced the jury, defied all precedent and pigeoned-holed the appeal. So the sentences, such as they were, stood.

A curious official indifference afflicted the three detectives of the Reali Carabinieri after the trial: Farris and Cappezutti received rewards amounting to $40 apiece and resigned in disgust. Fabbroni was promoted to Major—a rank which should already have been his by right of seniority—and would also have resigned had not his advisers reminded him that such action would be interpreted as a confession that there had been a miscarriage of justice at Viterbo and that the convicted were innocent. So he remained and tried to have an investigation opened in regard to the Alta, or Higher, Camorra and its social and political protectors based on the suppressed evidence. It was in vain. He then turned part of his documents over to a friend who, after having

promised not to reveal their source, published them in a book. The friend was prosecuted and betrayed Fabbroni, and Fabbroni was tried by a military court and dismissed from the service, after having been *mis à la réforme* for several months without pay.

If the World War had not arrived to turn the thought and activities of the Neapolitan *mala vita*, or underworld, into legitimate, although still intriguing and sanguinery, channels and to sever, for the time at least, its social and political affiliations, a revision of the Viterbo trial would very likely have followed with the inevitable arraignment of the three great detectives and their assistants as conspirators. Indeed, legal machinery had already been set in motion to prosecute Abbatemaggio as such and as a perjurer when the war came. Many former Camorristi served in it with loyalty and bravery and the irrepressible Abbatemaggio returned from it covered with wounds and medals.

All too well established is the fact that the psychological reaction of the war produced an outbreak of criminality in hitherto law-abiding communities. In Naples there were signs of a revival of the *mala vita* when a second diversion captivated its activities of intrigue and violence. This was Fascismo with its cudgels and castor oil. It was at Naples, where the second Fascist Congress voted, October 26, 1922, its right to govern the country, under the inspiration of which the March on Rome was planned at Milan.

From those parlous times a new Naples emerged, restored and reconstructed not only socially and politically but also hygienically and architecturally in which there could be no place for a Camorra or even sympathetic memories of the Viterbo "martyrs." But, there was at least one mind which continued to nurture such memories—the mind of the *Campo Santo* priest, Don Ciro Vitozzi, their "Guardian Angel" still.

Compared with other characters which Mr. Forgione has so strikingly drawn with a skill that combines a close adherence to verity as well as gift for effective protrayal, Don Ciro Vitozzi is easily the most impressive, the most intriguing. The more one contemplates these characteristics, however, in an attempt to solve the problem of his life the more enigmatical that life becomes. Any attempt to draw fine intellectual distinctions with their necessary moral reservations would only mar the portrait. Fortunately, Mr. Forgione indulges in none of these things. He paints him, if not as he actually is, then as he reveals himself to be—to some a saint to others the greatest actor off the stage. It is with the idea of furnishing further material for discussion on this point that I have decided to introduce here what may be considered as the " 'Guardian Angel's' 'Swan Song' " for his unfortunate *protégés.*

The priest completed his sentence in the first year of the War. Apparently that conflict with its immediate aftermath of social and political turmoil

made slight impression on him. He continued to be a man of one idea: everywhere he went and on all occasions he preached the innocence of the Viterbo "martyrs" and prophesied their ultimate rehabilitation. In the Spring preceding the March on Rome he encountered, in circumstances in every way suggestive of his character, an Italo-American journalist, Bernardino Ciambelli, who reported the interview for the *Progresso Italo-Americano* of New York. Mr. Ciambelli relates that he had spent several days at the villa of a friend in Posillipo, a suburb of Naples, and one evening had taken a tramcar for the city which had only carried him half-way. Before him was either a long tramp on foot or the chance encounter with an empty returning cab:

At the crisis of my discomfiture a priest strolled by and stopped. He had an open, benign air and a pair of piercing eyes which seemed to search out one's thoughts. He asked:

"You would like to go to Naples?"

"Certainly."

"Do not be worried. Let us wait."

A taxi went by, but it was full. The priest made a mysterious sign. The chauffer answered: "I am at your service." He went on for twenty meters when his passengers got out and he returned to us. The priest gravely saluted him and said to me: "The car is ours."

I got in and the courteous minister of Our Lord seated himself at my side. Scarcely had the taxi started when he said to me:

"Look me full in the face. Would you believe me to be a criminal or an honest man?"

I was somewhat confused and, while the luminous eyes of the priest moved over me searchingly, answered:

"From the clothes you wear I should say that you were an honest man."

He quoted: "The cassock does not make the monk," and added simply: "I am Ciro Vitozzi."

Immediately I recovered from my confusion and said: "Good, I want to interview you. I am an Italo-American journalist."

Don Ciro at first remained undecided and then said: "Very well. Sunday I will meet you at the Villa Fiore, in Posillipo, and will answer your questions."

I descended at the Hôtel di Londra and Don Ciro embraced me. On Sunday we both punctually kept the appointment. The interview was a long delightful *convivio* intermingled with quaffs of sparkling Gragnano. To my questions Don Ciro always answered promptly and frankly.

And here is the gist of the interview: According to Don Ciro the verdict of Viterbo will be reversed. "There is not the slightest doubt," he said, "of the innocence of all those convicted; they were the victims of the machinations of the Captain of Carabinieri, Fabbroni.

"There was published at Naples a little book entitled 'Il Duca si diverte' (The Duke Amuses Himself), which related things which were not at all pleasing to the *Reggia di Capodimonte* (The local Royal Palace). The Questura (the municipal police) was ordered to suppress it, but did not succeed in doing so.

"They called the Captain of Carabinieri, Fabbroni, to the Reggia and ordered him to destroy all books which were displeasing to the Duke. Fabbroni immediately went to the Questura and acted in a firm manner, but the Questura made him understand that in certain cases which concerned public security there was no need of the Carabinieri (The Royal National Police) to act.

"From this circumstance arose the first trouble between the Carabinieri and the Questura. Captain Fabbroni, being protected in high places, won the first battle and succeeded in sequestrating many copies of the book 'Il Duca si diverte,' and thereby acquired a great deal of influence. Taking advantage of his position, Fabbroni next affirmed that the

Camorra still existed in Naples and that the Questura was working hand and glove with the most powerful *Camorristi.* Now, just when the quarrel between the Questura and the Carabinieri was most furious, the Cuoculo couple were killed, and the Questura naturally began an investigation, but the Carabinieri cried out that the crime had been committed by the Camorra and that only the Carabinieri had the right to judge and punish the guilty, and so the Carabinieri arrested Enrico Alfano—Erricone, my *compariello* (baptismal brother)—and others.

"I questioned Erricone and when I had become convinced of his entire innocence I employed all my influence on his behalf so that justice could be done, and, after a long examination, all those arrested were released.

"Then Fabbroni knowing that I had acted to save my *compariello,* pronounced the *vendetta.* The Cuoculo affair had to be solved. The Carabinieri followed their own devices and those really guilty could thus live in security. They found an Abbatemaggio, a *disgraziato* (an unfortunate wretch), whom they vociferously proclaimed as the savior of Naples, and who was instructed to give false testimony and relate a string of lies which it is amazing that any one could believe, even if sworn to.

"One terrible day the Carabinieri came to my house and arrested me amid the tears of my sisters. They had no warrant for my arrest. I protested and was most brutally treated. So as not to make a scene, I followed the Carabinieri, who took me to their barracks and then to Fabbroni who in a friendly manner, advised me to sign some papers he had prepared. He said:

" 'Sign, dear Don Ciro, and you will be instantly free.'

"I read and, when I saw that the papers accused the innocent, declared that the Cuoculo murder was the work of the Camorra, I refused to sign and was beaten and outrageously treated and then cast into prison.

"On the day after my arrest, my father, from whom my sisters had kept secret what had happened, went to church as usual and there hearing from a friend what had happened to me, he fell unconscious from the shock and expired."

At this point in his narrative, Don Ciro wept, and then proceeded as follows:

"For six months they kept me in solitary confinement; for six months I was not allowed to see my sisters; it was only after seven months that I heard of the death of my father. The rest is known to all: The trial at Viterbo—the months of agony, during which the most terrible lies were told so that perjury might triumph. The jury convicted, but they committed an error of justice which should be rectified. None of those convicted was concerned in the murder of the Cuoculos, which was the result of thieves quarreling over the division of booty. The Carabinieri wished to have confirmed their allegation that the Camorra dominated Naples, and so to this end they sacrificed innocent persons."

"Will you explain to me, Don Ciro, your devotion to Erricone?"

"On an unfortunate day Enrico Alfano indulged in a quarrel with a youth and received a slash on the face. The parents of the youth came to my house in order to have Alfano pardon him, because they feared what might happen if the boy were not forgiven. I answered that I would go to Alfano's, who was still confined in bed on account of his wound, but I required that the youth, who was the cause of the wound, should accompany me. He was very much afraid, but finally consented to do so. I went to Alfano's, talked with him and implored him to pardon, and Alfano pardoned in the most magnanimous fashion.

"Of this I retained many pleasant impressions because I understood that he was a man of heart, and when he told me that he had not yet been confirmed but ardently desired the sacrament, I offered it, and thus it was that Enrico Alfano became my *compariello.*

"The Carabinieri, well knowing that in all Naples I was held in the utmost esteem and respect, realized that if I remained at liberty it would not be possible to proceed with the Viterbo trial, and so wanted to annihilate me. But I still live and the last battle will be a grand victory, a vindication."

As he uttered these words, Don Ciro straightened up, proud and resolute, while his eyes shone with the light of courage.

Then Signor Ciambelli adds these words:

"You will see that Don Ciro will win."

So far the writer of the foregoing interview has been mistaken. Moreover, I think that most readers will agree with me that Don Ciro himself hardly gives due credit to his three resourceful opponents in the Reali Carabinieri and their tireless, remorseless endeavor to make truth prevail.

It only remains for me to reveal the genesis of the book and its title of "The Men of Silence." The psychology of social and political delinquency wherever it has been the expression of a community, an episode in national history, has always attracted me. The possession copies of the documents in the secret *dossier* of the Dreyfus case gave me the opportunity, between 1895 and 1906, to write much about that *cause célèbre* which had turned the French nation mad. By a curious coincidence, at precisely the time the French *Cour de Cassation* was shaping its opinion as to the utter innocence of the unfortunate artillery officer, the Cuocolos were slain in the Province of Naples.

I had recently met in New York a certain romantic and adventurous Italian royal personage, then on his way to climb Mount St. Elias in Alaska. A re-

cent episode in his life caused him to pronounce upon the social condition of Naples with some vehemence. By the time the three indomitable Carabinieri were making their wholesale arrests, I had read several books and reports on the subject and later, coming into possession of about all the documents that had been inspired by what I had been told was a determined Royal desire to erase forever the Camorrista stigma from the fair face of *la bella Napole*, I wrote about that subject as I had about the Dreyfus affair.

While studying my documents two things struck me: the failure of serious narrative to reflect the actual complexes of Camorrista mentality; the proneness of fiction to make use of the intriguing romance of the old classical régime which had utterly disappeared with the exit of Alfano's potent predecessor, Aniello Ansiello, toward the end of the nineteenth century.

The entire truth was in the documents, if it could only be extracted; there was also material for a score of novels, if only one knew how to fashion them. While trying to imagine how an elder Dumas or a Gaboriau would handle such promising material, the idea occurred to me that the adventures of the three Carabinieri, from first to last, curiously conformed to the rules of constructive fiction and without any elaboration, while the movement of such a narrative could be kept going and dramatic interest maintained by introducing in its novelistic place the dialogue which could be extracted from the testimony

given by witnesses to the Maresciallo Capezutti or Captain Fabbroni or the *Giudici d'Instruzione*—the Examining Magistrates. Thus conclusive history could be written in novel form which would possess all the elements of both truthful record and absorbing drama with each sustaining the other in absolutely faithful narrative. What was needed, on the one hand, was a thorough knowledge of the environment so that there should be no misinterpretation of facts, and, on the other, a keen sense of forensic and artistic selection and co-ordination. Unfortunately, I possessed neither.

In 1923 chance made me acquainted with Louis Forgione, who was then at work on his intensely realistic romance of Alien-American proletarianism, entitled "Reamer Lou," to be followed five years later by his still more absorbing story of the tragic complexities of Italo-American life as entrenched in New York City and across the Hudson, "The River Between."

Aside from his grasp of the essentials of constructive narrative and his poetic gift of assimilation and delineation, Mr. Forgione possessed an intimate knowledge of Naples and an acquaintance with persons who could check up the police and judicial reports in the light of actual experience, and so enhance their distinctions, if not their luster.

Here was an opportunity not to be ignored. I broached the subject to him. He entered enthusiastically into the idea of the form and treatment of the

literary project I have described, and his third book, "The Men of Silence," is the result.

Here then is history, here romance, here a detective story which would certainly be consigned to the realm of the imaginative were it not for the unimpeachable character of its sources. In it the experience and instruction of police detection are mingled in a way to promote feverish discussion in those rival circles. As for the rest, I have no doubt: Mr. Forgione's gift of selection and co-ordination of the historical and artistic essentials will be obvious to all, as will his art as a story teller.

The word *Omertà* from which "The Men of Silence" takes its title is both symbolic and literal: it suggests all the lurid and glamorously intriguing existence of a pernicious social institution; it designates the principal code of that institution, the transgression of which was death. The persistent observance of *Omertà* still dominates the Viterbo "martyrs", still inspires the eloquence of Don Ciro Vitozzi. Without Abbatemaggio, it might even be regarded as the emblem of complete, but impenetrable, innocence.

BOOK ONE

THE CIRQUE OF CRIME

THE MEN OF SILENCE

CHAPTER 1

The Piazza San Ferdinando is still one of the most aristocratic quarters of Naples. Along the narrow streets radiating from it loom ancient palaces whose *piani nobili*, or second floors, are occupied by families once prominent under the viceroys of Spain. Number 95 Via Nardones, however, is an exception, for the old owners, the Avellini, though they occupy the *piano nobile*, belong merely to the rising commercial class of Naples.

Slowly, at the usual hour of seven, on the morning of June 6, 1906, the *portinaia*, or janitress, pushed open the heavy double doors of the street entrance. "*Cca bella iurnata. . . .*" What a lovely day! Out of the clear, rose-flooded morning air moved puff after puff of breeze, laden with sea-tang and perfume of hidden gardens.

Coming out again, the janitress heard a tinkling of bells. She peered into the street. The milch goats that go on their morning rounds with the *capraio*—for even in a large city like Naples there survives the delightful Italian custom of having milk brought to you, fresh, creamy, warm from the udder

—were lingering in front of the *palazzo*. At the same moment a heavy tramping on the stairs made her look around. The *capraio*, a short, squat fellow, was coming down.

"Are those people out—them on the top floor?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen 'em."

"Whistled three times and got no answer."

Angelina, the *portinaia*, shrugged her shoulders. "I suppose they're still sleeping."

The *capraio* delivered himself of a crude remark which might be translated as something anent the "life of a bishop," and snapping his whip, whistled to the flock . . . gradually, delicately, the tinkling passed down the street.

Hardly had a few minutes gone by, while the courtyards, rich with potted plants and trees, glowed emerald within the folds of the huge palaces, when a girl, a domestic evidently, entered, nodded to the janitress, who was yawning lazily, trying to shake off the skeins of sleep, and went up the dim stairs. This newcomer, though not exactly beautiful, was what they describe in Italian by the untranslatable "simpatica," dusky skinned, with alert, dark eyes peculiarly Neapolitan. Running up to the fifth floor, she rang the apartment bell, in order to begin her daily work, being employed as domestic by a couple who had lived there since May. No response. She waited a minute and rang again. Still no answer; whereupon she thought, "They don't want to be disturbed; must have come home late." This had

occasionally been the case; so slowly she descended and strolled out into the quiet street.

At half-past ten this girl, whose name was Felicia Carusio, returned and again rang the bell—rang it three or four times. . . . Still no answer. What could be the trouble?

Filled with misgivings, Felicia hurried down to the second floor and knocked at the landlord's apartment.

"*Chi é?*"

"*Song' i'—Felicella.* . . . I can't understand why the people on the top floor don't answer the bell. . . ."

"The Cuocolos?"

"Yes. . . . Do you know whether—"

"Wait a minute," interrupted Signor Avellino in a voice that was gruff and somewhat agitated.

She heard him move around—sounds of hurried dressing—and then the door was pushed open: out emerged the proprietor, paunch ahead like a swollen sail, and mustaches thrust forth as though for an elephantine charge. His fat face wore a troubled expression—trouble shining all around its shaven creases. . . .

Signor Avellino—as is customary with Italian landlords—knew something about the antecedents of his tenants. Therefore, without mincing words, he hastened downstairs and stepped across the street to the police station of the San Ferdinando district. And there he loudly proclaimed that something was

certainly amiss in the apartment on the top floor of his—Signor Avellino's—*palazzo*! *Vice-Questore*, or Captain, Francesco Bianchi, was in charge there. He nodded and called out to one of his agents: "Simonetti, go over with this gentleman and see what the trouble is."

The fifth floor apartment consisted of four rooms and a kitchen. They entered the *salotto*, or sitting-room, by means of the landlord's master key. This was a large chamber respectably, even luxuriously, furnished, in which nothing had apparently been disturbed. Quickly they passed ahead into the morning sunshine of the dining-room. Here the table showed the remains of a supper set for two, and there were some half-eaten tarts which Felicia remembered having purchased the afternoon before at the pastry shop of Val Bol in the Via Toledo.

From the dining-room Simonetti led the way into the adjoining bed-chamber which was elegantly furnished in new red-upholstered walnut. As he opened the door and peeked into the room, the police agent gasped. The shutters were still drawn. On a bureau to one side stood a tiny night lamp with its thin blade of light, disturbed by the opening of the door, wavering over the glass. In its yellowish gloaming he saw sprawled on the bed the body of a beautiful, tawny-haired woman dressed in a white silk nightgown. One leg was stretched across the mattress; the other, as if in act of descending, rested its heel on the crimson carpet. Blood gleamed everywhere: in large

splotches over the crumpled sheets and counterpane. On the bed lay three emptied drawers, two belonging to the bureau and the other to a closet whose mirror glittered between the windows. The floor was littered with drawers, jewel-cases, boxes, a prayer-book, and a green leather purse that gaped open like a diminutive sea-monster.

Over the thick red plush of an armchair shone a black silk stocking and a box of ointment, while on the floor beneath rested a large ball of cotton. "*Puverella*!" sobbed Felicia, peering in, "She had been so ill!—and she must have been doctoring herself when—"

Holding up his hand, commanding silence, Simonetti sped into the kitchen. Here he immediately became alert, glanced sharply around, and then got down on his knees. For under the sink glimmered a pail of bloody water over one side of which were slopped two red-stained towels. Evidently the murderer or murderers must have been secure in remaining undisturbed as they set about effacing the marks of their crime. The landlord, bending over him, was about to pick up a towel when Simonetti commanded sternly, "Do not touch anything! . . ."

"The key! The key!" came the sound of Felicia's shrill voice from the threshold of the *salotto*.

"*Che cos' é?*" the agent went in. She was pointing to the table in the parlor. "Look! there's the key!"

He fixed eyes on her for a flashing moment. The

girl's face was white, her lips mumbling continuously, "*Puverella, puverella*!"

"The latch-key to the apartment—hm!" He picked it up, made sure it fitted the lock, glanced quickly over the room, and then said to the others, "Well, that's enough for the present."

"And poor Signor Cuocolo! What will he do when he hears about this? He loves her so much!" exclaimed Felicia amid her tears.

The landlord grunted. Simonetti spoke sharply, "We'll see about him—He loves her much, hey?"

Locking the door behind him, the police agent descended and reported across the street to Captain Bianchi.

Within a few minutes police officials were hurrying in and out of the solemn palace on the Via Nardones. Idlers crowded around the entrance. "What's happened?" "*Ch'é succiesso*?" Pushing his way through this motley group, Captain Bianchi, a man of impressive appearance, accompanied by two of his police agents, a doctor, and the examining magistrate of Naples, entered the *palazzo* and climbed to the fifth floor.

Back in the police station opposite, they assembled the facts discovered by their preliminary investigation. And Doctor Guidone made out the following official report, namely: that the woman must have been slain at about eighteen o'clock (6 P. M.) on the previous evening; that she had come to her

death by receiving thirteen dagger wounds—strange triangular-shaped wounds!—in the neck and body; that there were also discolorations and abrasions around the throat. And he gave it as his opinion that two or more persons had committed the crime: one holding the woman by the neck, while the other or others had stabbed her to death.

"Bad business!" commented Simonetti.

The others nodded; Captain Bianchi murmured, "Seems to me that there is more to this than appears on the surface."

Instantly the examining magistrate drew up straight, and then turned to smile blandly at the Captain who had withdrawn to the rear of the large whitewashed room. "I suppose there is. There always is, in any murder."

By the time the doctor and Captain Bianchi signed their reports, the sun was blazing high in the firmament, the shadow was receding from Vesuvius like a mantle, revealing its breast of rose and green, and the city beneath, stretched languidly by the Latin sea, in the presence of its flame-souled mountain, kept droning and humming in its thousand labyrinthine ways, in its palaces and terraced gardens, supremely unconcerned at this core of mutilated flesh in the dim apartment on the Via Nardones.

CHAPTER 2

A CLEAR case of uxoricide!

Cavaliere Cicaglione, examining magistrate of the city, sat down in a rear room of the station-house to draw up his own report. He had gone over the grounds thoroughly and questioned the maid Felicia.

The girl's answers were simple: the lady and her husband had lived happily—so happily! Always he had brought home dainties for her, and pastries and fine things.

"And what kind of people did you think they were?"

Felicia shrugged her shoulders. "Well . . . she smoked cigarettes . . . and had a queer look in her eyes. . . . But the poor lady! Poor thing! She had been so ill too. . . ."

"Of what?"

"I'm not sure. She used to anoint herself, and every morning I'd find lumps of soiled cotton in the waste basket."

"And she had much jewelry, didn't she?"

"Oh piles!" fluted the girl, "She had gorgeous earrings with rose diamonds and cameo pendants and diamond rings and a stunning butterfly brooch!"

Questioned about the husband—who had not yet been located—the maid said that something had ap-

peared to be preying on his mind the previous afternoon. He had stalked up and down the *salotto* moodily and had not, as usual, gone out for a stroll, but had lain down for a nap just about the time she was to go home. And she had heard him mumble something about having to leave later in the evening.

Cavaliere Cicaglione nodded gravely, while the case gradually built itself in his mind.

And now he sat there assembling his facts. Spread across the desk at his right hand were some police records sent up from headquarters. They concerned a certain Maria Cutinelli (the murdered woman), and Gennaro Cuocolo (her husband, who had not yet been apprehended). The records were very precise as to their careers, for both were believed to be affiliated with the *mala vita* or mysterious criminal world of Naples.

Gennaro Cuocolo was the son of an honest and wealthy leather merchant. At an early age, though, he had formed evil companionships in the disreputable dives along the water-front. His family had striven time and again to reclaim him, but in vain. He was a strong, overbearing fellow damned with a violent temper. Placed in college, he was expelled for beating a comrade. He was soon charmed back into the crimson cirque of crime and mystery. Deeper and deeper he went—got mixed with buyers of stolen goods, with thieves, blackmailers—was sent to jail. . . . And finally his relatives gave him

up altogether, considering Gennaro as one dead.

He kept careening along his wild course. In 1900, at the age of thirty-nine, Cuocolo married an outstanding beauty of the criminal world. This Maria Cutinelli had, until then, led a most adventurous life on the upper crust of the *mala vita*. She had held powerful connections. And it was ruefully asserted by Gennaro's family that he had married her partly through fascination and partly through fear of her friends. (A forced marriage! thought the magistrate. . . . Perhaps, then, all was not so lovable, despite surface appearances and Felicia's lyricisms.)

The record went on: In 1903 Cuocolo had been arrested and imprisoned for one year on the charge of extortion. After that, the adventurous couple went to live in the Pigniasecca (Dead Pine) quarter, whence they later moved to 29 Via Rosario, Portamidina. They seemed to have few friends, although the tawny-haired woman, who occasionally reappeared in the Galleria Umberto Primo or the Via Toledo was still pointed out as "*A bella sorrentina*," "The Lovely Sorrentine," for Sorrento was her birthplace.

Numerous robberies seemed to have followed the trail of the Cuocolos, and once a wealthy woman named Siniscalco had been found robbed and stabbed near their home. But no evidence was ever forthcoming to connect the couple with the crime. On the contrary, it was marked down, the police were under obligation to Cuocolo who had, more than

once, supplied them with information whereby they were able to capture criminals and recover stolen goods. It was also added that the husband was suspected of being a *basista*, or planner of crimes. And from time to time the couple had been under police surveillance.

They were watched less closely by the authorities, however, when in May 1906, they moved into the Via Nardones apartment right opposite the important police station of San Ferdinando. (The police were oblivious of the fact that from behind the venetian blinds of the apartment on the fifth floor they themselves were under surveillance!)

The magistrate finished drawing out his report. According to his conclusion, the husband had left in the early part of the evening and had later stealthily returned. Slaying his wife, presumably with the aid of a confederate, he had ransacked the apartment and decamped with what negotiable property he could lay hands on, with the intention most likely of fleeing to America. And in his hurry he had left the latch-key (evidently his own) on the table of the sitting-room.

This conclusion seemed obvious. Cicaglione, folding up his official report, was about to sign an order for the arrest of one Gennaro Cuocolo, when word was received:

"A man's body has been found this morning at Torre del Greco. It has been identified as Gennaro Cuocolo of No. 95 Via Nardones!"

CHAPTER 3

Gazing across the Bay of Naples, from the hill of the famous pines, one may see a white line of communities fringing the opposite shore under the very shadow of the Vesuvius. These are the suburbs of Torre del Greco and Torre Annunziata scattering off toward Castellamare. The whole horseshoe of towns with Naples in its center comprises a population of over a million souls.

Skirting the bay a long narrow road called "Cupa Calastri"—"Cupa" being the local term for a country lane—trails from the *Piazza* at Torre del Greco (The Tower of the Greek) to the outskirts of Torre Annunziata a mile or two beyond.

It was that same lovely morning, just about the time when the maid Felicia first set to ringing the bell on the Via Nardones. A carter was driving down the Cupa, with his load of volcanic ashes, intending to dump it into the bay at a point where the road swerved toward some gaunt sea-grieved rocks. Above grumbled Vesuvius, barely sated by his destructive eruption of two months previous, when hell flares had swayed and rolled over this sunny way and flaming ashes had fallen like a shower of meteors. The sun was glinting on some ruins of dwellings to

the left, and to the other hand the sea foamed and sparkled. At the end of a long desolate space, a mass of reefs, savage and black, the outpourings of some terrible eruption of old, jutted over a blaze of waters beating forever against them. Toward these rocks curved the road, past a long squat building, a slaughter house, under some ancient arches, and then out toward the beach where black boats were drawn high on the sand.

All at once the driver noticed a glimmer, a crimson puckering in the soft flood of morning sunshine. Something sprawled there, just a short distance ahead, on the broad low wall that bordered the Cupa. He crossed himself. "Mamma do Carmine!" His eyes bulged out with fright and horror.

Across this wall, stretched on its back, with head resting on one stony edge and legs hanging from the other, arms thrown out in abandon, lay the body of a man! But in what a state! Blood-drenched, red-clotted, stabbed all over as if with diabolic hatred, brow smashed in . . .! "Mother of God!" exclaimed the carter, and veering around, whipping his horses, sped back toward the *Piazza*.

Quickly the *Delegato* of Torre del Greco was summoned. He hurried to the scene followed shortly after by the local *Maresciallo* of Carabinieri and by the *Pretore*, or examining magistrate of the town.

An examination of the body revealed a man, vigorous and athletic, smartly dressed, with rose silk underwear. His watch, jewelry and change were

intact. Only a well-worn inside pocket showed where a purse might have been. The top of the head was crushed in by the blows of a cudgel, and on the neck and body were forty-seven dagger wounds (triangular-shaped gashes similar to those found on the body of *'a Bella Sorrentina*!). Clutched in the right hand was a large kitchen knife turned with blade toward the bicep, as though it had been raised against an assailant. It was smeared with blood from nearby wounds.

"A *dichiaramento*," was the first conclusion of the officials as the three of them bent over the body.

This man had been killed in a brawl or *dichiaramento*—a quarrel previously arranged by knights of the underworld for doing away with someone. He had evidently brought the knife from home in self defence and had been beaten down.

But what was this? One of them, prowling around, discovered in a crevice of lava near the wall a penknife, open, covered with blood! And on the ashes near the ancient arches he came across a confusion of footprints as if made by many people in ambush!

The others hurried up at his exclamation. They scanned the footprints, the penknife. . . . They shook their heads. Queer business, this.

Two dwellings stood within hailing distance. These were fishermen's homes built on headlands of rocks that overlooked the sea. (It was a summer sea with its surface of dark-edged, violet bloom!) The

Delegato, Ventimiglia, went to the nearest. No. They hadn't heard anything. The bronzed fisher wife was noisy in her exclamations. Oh, poor man! But no, she hadn't seen or heard a single thing!

Ventimiglia asked sternly, "But at what hour did you go to sleep?"

"Oh, late—about nine."

"And you heard nothing?"

"I swear—not a thing."

The *Delegato* inquired at the other dwelling. Yes, there the woman had come to the threshold for a breath of fresh air. But had she heard anything? Oh no! Of course not!

In disgust Ventimiglia came back to the body. "Why, the murderers must have been heard and seen! It was full moon, a warm summer evening. . . . and this place in the evenings is frequented by people—lovers and such."

The examining magistrate smiled queerly. "What the deuce can one do with these fools?" He, like the others was well aware of the wall of silence which confronted the authorities at every turn whenever they sought to investigate a crime. He knew that the greatest enemy of justice was the *Omertà*, or the code of "Honorable Silence," which had such an unshakable hold on the populace. In South Italy a crime against a person was looked upon as an affair between individuals in which the authorities had no right to meddle. It was an affair of honor, pure and simple. Witnesses before the authorities were

despised and people would suffer anything rather than testify in court. This attitude, the growth of centuries, had its inception under tyrannical foreign governments when the natives were forced to take the law in their own hands and protect their avengers.

"Strange," commented the Carabiniere, "that they left the corpse here. . . !" and he gazed toward the sea where the black reefs jutted sharply like wings of fallen half-submerged angels. It would indeed have been a simple matter to dump the body over into the water.

Ventimiglia shook his head. "Seems to me an 'exemplary' murder done by Neapolitan Camorrists. That blow on the head with a cudgel—that brow smashed in like an egg—that's the sign of *Carogna*, isn't it?"

The others agreed. It certainly did look like the blow given solely to traitors . . . but that was in the old days—when there existed such a thing as a Camorra. (At the word "Camorrists" Ventimiglia's companions had smiled at him as grownups will at a child's fantasy.)

"But how about these other signs," insisted the *Delegato*, "these triangular-shaped wounds?"

The two pursed their mouths. Now wasn't this fellow altogether too imaginative—too fantastic, in fact? Of course the wounds were triangular-shaped; and they resembled those made anciently by the great execution dagger of the Camorra. But what of it? Wasn't the Camorra a thing of the past?

Identified as Gennaro Cuocolo, and soon learning that his wife had also been murdered, and that her body also presented triangular-shaped wounds, it was natural to connect the two crimes. . . . But still, why stir trouble?

Carlo Ventimiglia now took vigorous charge of the local investigation. He got in touch with the Neapolitan authorities, and together they made certain deductions, namely: that Cuocolo had been suddenly attacked and almost instantly slain as he passed through the Cupa; that he had attempted to defend himself with the penknife—what desperate courage he must have had to fight to the end with a penknife against overwhelming odds! . . . that his murderers had deliberately placed the kitchen knife in his hand so as to give the affair the semblance of a duel; and that they had gone away overlooking the penknife.

The big meat cutter was identified as really belonging to the kitchen on the Via Nardones. Felicia remembered having used it many times. How did it get to Torre del Greco? Who had taken it out of the house? And from the way it was clutched in the fingers it must have been placed among them while the nerves were still alive!

"What a mystery!" thought Ventimiglia. And he cast his eyes across the bay at Naples stretched languorously on its hills. Somewhere within that city lurked the solution to the crime—somewhere

was walking a man bearing on his body wounds inflicted by the penknife. But, whoever he was, that murderer came under the protection of a power the very thought of which made Ventimiglia shudder. And time and again he murmured to himself, "If I only dared. . . ."

Many consultations were held by the magistrates of Torre del Greco and of Naples; and they finally arrived at a definite conclusion: that the Cuocolos owed their death to some secret criminal group, and that they had been slain as a punishment for revealing secrets of the gang. This theory was strengthened by two facts: the police of Naples admitted that they had frequently received information from Cuocolo relating to robberies, of which they had availed themselves; and an anonymous letter, which Ventimiglia received on June 7, declared that on the night of the murder a number of Neapolitans, whose names it gave, had held a supper party at the *trattoria*, or tavern, of Mimi-a-Mare, situated about two hundred yards from the Cupa where the body of Cuocolo was found. The letter added that during supper a man had entered the dining-room and had said to the apparent leader of those present, "It is done." Thereupon the one addressed had replied, "Very well," and had offered the stranger a glass of wine, after which he had gone away!

CHAPTER 4

When the examining magistrate of Naples received the report of the letter from Ventimiglia and learned the names of the men who had comprised the supper party at the tavern Mimi-a-Mare, he whistled, his eyes narrowed, and a puzzled expression gripped his face. "Big birds!" he exclaimed. Big birds indeed! For the men were Enrico Alfano —the great Erricone, reputed supreme leader of the Neapolitan Camorra; his handsome younger brother Ciro; Giovanni Rapi, the famous "Professor," its alleged treasurer; and Gennaro Ibello, executive head of the suburban Camorra, together with Erricone's coachman Iacovitti!

At that time no Italian, much less a Neapolitan, would admit that the Camorra existed any longer. The famous secret organization, the so-called "classical Camorra," which had originated in the bristling Sierras and crimson glens of Castille, and had been brought over by the legendary giant, Gamur, during the epoch of the Spanish viceroys in the sixteenth century, now apparently existed no longer. Under the Bourbons it had held sway as a sort of semi-political society, roughly dividing the world into two classes: the timid and the dominant. And by brute

force, the latter extorted tribute from the former. Their idea was: "I am stronger than you; therefore you must pay me." This was called "the right of Camorra!"

Working in the dark, aided by the Bourbon government—which was nothing but a legalized Camorra—it had spread tentacles everywhere, taking tribute from every shopkeeper, peddler, dock worker, smuggler, thief and gutter bird in Naples and the surrounding towns. If a robber tried to work outside of its organization he was invariably caught, deprived of his booty, and punished. If anyone antagonized or denounced it, he found himself ignored by the authorities, opposed by a whole association that, mysteriously, out of darkness, struck at him from all sides, avenging the offense in the name of *Annurata Suggietà*—the Honorable Society!

Toward the end of the nineteenth century this arrogant brotherhood had become a sort of bloated Neapolitan Tweed Ring, and had gone to lengths undreamed of by the American Sachems, plundering the treasury, making and unmaking mayors, magistrates, senators—holding absolute control over the city's political machinery, terrorizing Naples and the surrounding country, covering the whole region with a network of espionage, thrusting its influence right to the Ministries at Rome!

Things grew so bad that in 1901 the Department of the Interior, by royal order, conducted an inves-

tigation in Naples—and lo! a few months later the press of the world was telling the story of the society's sudden downfall! In America the stories bore such headlines as "Naples Tammany Overthrown!" "Victory for Italy's Lexow Committee!" etc. Everything was smoothed over; all Naples waxed noisy in proclaiming that the Camorra was no more.

Surely then, to talk of it in 1906 was ridiculous. There was some gossip, of course, about a "reformed" Honorable Society of which Erricone, reputed head of the Camorra since 1893, was said to be still leader. But when the Camorra was mentioned to this same Erricone he would laugh gently, saying, "Do you really believe there is such a thing?" And the authorities, whenever they heard the tales, simply smiled as Neapolitans will, and—to use a local saying—"withdrew into the street of the bells!"

This time, the examining magistrates of Naples and Torre del Greco decided to pay attention to the anonymous letter, especially as the newspapers throughout the peninsula were harping on the double murder in an annoying manner. The powerful "Mattino" and "Roma" were persistent in making an outcry about Naples and its Camorra. Strict inquiries had come from Rome. Something had to be done. Investigation showed that during the evening of the fifth there had indeed been a supper party at the Mimi-a-Mare and that the four men comprising it were these reputed leaders—however

"reformed"—of the Neapolitan criminal world!

They also learned that the second day after the murder, Erricone, his fiancée and her sister had gone again to Mimi-a-Mare, in their swift carriage and held another party there, the women in gorgeous silks, loaded with pendants of coral and gold, the men in their suits of uniform gray.

An attempt, clearly, to appear as habitual frequenters of the tavern. But the owner of Mimi-a-Mare, when questioned secretly by a police agent, blurted. "*Chi 'e sape?*" Who knows 'em? He had never seen Erricone or the other men before the night of the fifth; and shrugging his shoulders, he added, "At Mimi-a-Mare so many people come. This is a well-known tavern. And I—what do I know who you are or what you are called? And just the same we don't know and don't care who they are." He appeared annoyed at the questions anyhow, which obviously were connected with the murder committed nearby, and evidently wished to steer clear of any impending mess.

The next morning, Saturday, the ninth, a police agent, Catalano, informed the examining magistrate that a certain stool-pigeon, who did not wish to have his name revealed for fear of death, had confided to him that Erricone, returning from Torre del Greco with his woman companions, had grumbled at the ill-advised council of "the Graveyard Priest" to go again to the tavern.

Things rushed to a swift climax. Ventimiglia, on

the eighth, had already denounced the five diners to the examining magistrate of Naples; on the ninth a complete report was made out by the city authorities . . . and on the tenth—?

Strange news sped through Naples, causing surprise in the high quarters of the city and dismay in the dark, tortuous alleys, that like black veins of filth and crime, twist across the slums of Vicaria and Pendino: Erricone, Ibello and Rapi, together with Iacovitti the coachman, had been arrested on suspicion during the night and confined in the gloomy prison of Sant'Efremo, while Ciro, the younger Alfano, was being sought high and low by the police!

"Alfano, Enrico, to be questioned!"

The examining magistrate looked up and an expression of curiosity formed around his eyes as two guards appeared at the door with the prisoner between them.

This Erricone—Erricone means "Big Hal"—was a solid, dark man of thirty-two, middling in height, yet striking one at first glance as being rather tall. He had a habit of fixing his eyes keenly on the person addressed and fire pulsated within them as ideas stirred in his thoughts behind: a man little given to acting on impulse, and taciturn until aroused, when his phrases would pour forth in a lucid torrent, proving that his arguments had been carefully prearranged. Slanting across his left cheek, from the black mustache to the ear, was a scar that glowed

dangerously when he grew angry. Tenacity, rather more than bravery, was to be read in the strong structure of his jaw and square temples.

The prisoner stood at calm attention, dark against the sheer, clean rectangles of the office.

The examining magistrate surveyed him. So this thick-set, middle-sized fellow was Erricone, the successor of those handsome giants Tor e' Criscienzo and Ciccio Cappuccio who, with red, gold-braided hats, had lorded over their fellows even in prison! Yet all Naples knew the reputed story of how "Big Hal" had affirmed his leadership over the Camorra, and much of Naples admired him for it: when the famous Tottone 'o Pappavallo (Tottone, called "the Parrot" because of his nose), supreme head of the Camorra, was arrested in 1893, there had been a general movement in favor of Enrico Alfano, at that time a mere stripling of twenty, but inordinately ambitious. Coming out of prison, Tottone heard that Erricone meant to keep the supreme command. He guffawed and snarled, "What! That imp is a coward—a common whelp!" Whereupon Alfano formally challenged him. The encounter took place in the Piazza dei Virgini—one of the favorite Camorrist squares. Tottone went "half-dressed," that is to say, armed only with a stiletto, feeling that his young opponent would not be such a coward as to avoid the clash of "white arms": the *Zumpata*!—a traditional jumping duel with daggers, each man, Samurai-like seeking to draw first blood. But Erri-

cone brought firearms! As soon as he faced Tottone he pulled out a pistol. Throwing out his chest, Tottone laughed derisively. For the old chief had with him a faithful ally, the famous blood-hound who, when his master was in prison, kept duty on the narrow surrounding streets and was there daily fed with choice portions of meat by the faithful myrmidons of the dreaded Camorrist. This hound had until then crouched quietly at his master's feet. With a growl, it sprang at Erricone, knocking the pistol from his hand.

Instantly, drawing another, Erricone fired at his leering opponent; but the dog had caught his sleeve and the bullet went wild. . . . Tottone had raised his dagger . . . they were drawing closer together. . . . 'o Pappavallo was getting set for a leap. . . . Then, all at once, the pistol spat fire—the hound flew at Erricone's throat . . . but this second shot had grazed the old man's cheek: blood spurted forth. Tottone understood: he had been hit. Laughing bitterly, he called his dog away and, turning his back upon Erricone, exclaimed, "Your mouth still smells of milk!"

The assembly of Camorrist chiefs, with a big majority for such are the laws of the Camorra, voted in favor of Alfano's definite appointment, because he had succeeded in drawing first blood from his adversary!

And this was the man who now stared intently into the face of the examining magistrate! He had

been arrested several times, charged with robbery and electoral corruption, and once for complicity in homicide, but nothing had ever been proved against him. His suspected crimes included those not mentioned in the Criminal Code—the ruin of wealthy families by misleading youths, the lending of money to young aristocrats at ruinous usury and others still more intangible. Even now, from the confident pose of his features, one could see that Erricone knew how little he had to fear from the complaisant police.

He was accused of being supreme head of the Camorra.

Erricone laughed softly. "Why no one but a romancer, *Signore*, would believe that the Camorra has any real existence."

"Were you acquainted with Gennaro Cuocolo?"

"Cuocolo—No Sir. I never knew the man."

"Why were you at the *Trattoria* Mimi-a-Mare on the night of June fifth?"

"Rapi intended to try out some horses which he had just bought. And we found ourselves at Torre del Greco. It was early evening. So we decided to stop at the tavern for supper before returning to Naples."

The examining magistrate's eyes became intent, as slowly, watching the other's features, he asked about the intruder: the glass of wine.

Erricone remained perfectly calm; the scar on his cheek alone grew slightly red. "An intruder,

Signore? I do not remember any. But if indeed a poor fellow did come in while we were making merry, what was more natural than that I should have offered him a glass of wine?"

Erricone dismissed for awhile, Gennaro Ibello was brought in.

Ibello, a tall, swarthy man of about forty-seven, grim, lean, dangerous-looking, with oblong head, long neck, and massive, hungering jaw, was a sort of figurehead, and at the most a lieutenant of Erricone. In his hard, dark way, he sought to imitate the master; but had never learned that master's gift of silence or the knack of dominating the minds of men. He also loaned money at usury—a sparrow picking up what the hawk had left. In 1886 he had received a light sentence for complicity in murder.

When accused of being the suburban Camorra's executive head, Ibello guffawed raucously. "Why, *Eccelenza*, the Camorra was ended long ago—ever since the great Ciccio Cappuccio retired. There is no such thing any more. And I—an executive head! Ugh! It's impossible, *Eccelenza!*

"Yes, Rapi bought the horses from his friend Luigi Massimo. It just happened that we went to Torre del Greco. At first Erricone wanted to go to Pussilipo; but Rapi didn't want the horses to be seen by Massimo who lives there."

"Had you made an appointment for the trip?"

"Oh no. We just happened to be in the Galleria,

and Iacovitti was there with the carriage and the new set of horses. They looked fine. And Erricone suggested that we try them out."

Rapi's interrogation came next. Here was a most singular character, a gentleman of the most refined type, dressed in the height of Parisian and London fashions, with courtliness in his gray, perfumed mustaches, dignity in his uptilted face, and studied ennui in his half-lowered eyelids. He was slightly plump, with hands white and silky as a debutante's. His face was always smooth and shining; but the eyes were somewhat puffed, pod-like, tired looking, with tell-tale wrinkles hovering around them.

A native of Casagiove (The House of Jove), Rapi had enjoyed a splendid education and, in his youth, had taught school, whence his soubriquet of "the Professor." His surname was originally Rapa; but in Italian "rapa" means turnip, and his pupils made fun of him. So he changed it.

Rapi was one of those individuals blessed with the fatal gift of familiarity, and was never tired of boasting of his friends among the police, the journalists and the aristocracy among whose magic circles he moved as a distinctive light. He spoke fluently the dialects of Southern Italy, could make himself understood in English and German, and was very fond of conversing in French with phrases of which he often curlicued his eloquent Tuscan. He was at home in Rome, Paris, Ostend and London, as well as in his own Naples. In these various places he

owned or directed, from time to time, chains of showy gambling clubs.

In Naples he could be seen, immaculately tailored, bejewelled, pomaded, sauntering around the Galleria Umberto Primo or, with eyes half-closed, hearkening to the music in the restaurants on the Via Toledo, usually accompanied by some smartly arrayed woman. One of these, a stately blonde known as Elvira, "the French Beauty," in whose honor was written the famous song " 'a Frangesa," was madly beloved by "Pasquino," the handsome Camorrist who boasted of bewitching all women. One day Pasquino met the couple strolling together in the Galleria and assaulted Rapi. The "Professor" remained on the defensive although he was known to be carrying a sword-cane at the time. Soon after this, Pasquino was killed in a *dichiaramento* which took place in a restaurant. When the police arrived they found only the corpse and the proprietor's wife who was asleep behind her desk. Shortly after, Rapi departed for Paris with Elvira, and in 1902 was expelled from that city with certain other "Knights of Industry" who had conducted gambling establishments in the City of Light under the guise of social clubs.

He returned to Naples with a large fortune and organized the *Unione del Mezzogiorno* in the luxurious Palazzo Lieti, of which he forced the Duca di Noia to become president, incidently dropping a mere 200,000 lire in its establishment. Yet this splurge did anything but impoverish him. In fact

moneys kept pouring into his coffers from unfathomed sources. . . .

Interrogated, Rapi repeated the identical story: they had simply gone out to try some horses; the trip had been entirely unpremeditated. And as for his being Treasurer of the Camorra—? "Ha! Ha! Ha! *Mon Dieu*!"

But soon flaws began to show in their story. First of all Iacovitti, the coachman, asserted that on the afternoon of the fifth, at 1 P.M., he had gone to the Galleria. There he saw Erricone who gave him strict orders to wait with his carriage at half-past three in front of Mele's department store on the corner. (Hardly an unpremeditated trip!) And he also thought—but wasn't quite sure—that he had seen a man in shirt sleeves, with black, broad-rimmed sailor hat, come into the tavern and hold a brief colloquy with Erricone.

Another flaw: Erricone maintained that his return to Mimi-a-Mare on the eighth was not premeditated, but spontaneous like the first trip. His fiancée and her sister said that they had wanted to go to S. Giorgio-a-Cremano to look at the terrible flow of lava and mud from the recent eruption; but reaching the Torre, they had felt hungry and decided to stop at the tavern. It was the first time they had ever been there. But Mimi, questioned by the authorities, said that this was not so for she remembered having seen that same woman before, enjoying her macaroni.

Erricone denied absolutely his having grumbled about this second trip. Rapi concurred. It was nothing but a series of unfortunate coincidences which had prompted the voices of calumniators. And besides, not one of them had ever known the Cuocolos. Absolutely not!

But while they were being interrogated almost daily, rather annoyed at the unwelcome attention which the newspapers throughout the peninsula were paying them, dark forces had already begun to stir on the outside, and the prisoners felt secure. Ciro Alfano gave himself up, smiling, confident, as though he knew that his stay in jail would not last long. Already movements were going on in that mysterious world which lay behind these men, movements which were calculated to free them, and no one could guess from what point these powers of darkness would take visible shape and strike: whether from the teeming slums, the nobility, the high halls of justice, or the church!

A few days later, the examining magistrate was told that a holy father, a priest, wished to speak to him.

CHAPTER 5

Clearing away some papers from the top of his desk, Cicaglione leaned back in his chair and motioned the attendant to let him enter.

The door to the antechamber was opened and a tall dark priest advanced. He was a man of middle age, robust and broad, with large sensuous eyes shaded by extremely long and silky lashes, glowing behind iron-rimmed glasses. His face was expressive, though marred, somewhat, because of a large mouth and thick, aquiline nose.

This was Don Ciro Vitozzi, a churchyard priest who, as Cicaglione knew very well, by his many ecclesiastical and political offices and by his work among the poor, possessed enormous influence. Risen out of the ranks of the common people, he was loved and almost idolized by them; and even the highest authorities of the church listened to his word with attention.

Raising a hand—his eyes burned behind the glimmer of glasses—the priest unctuously made a sign of the cross, murmuring, "*Benedette sia, Cavaliere. . . .*"

Nodding gravely, the examining magistrate asked him to be seated. Don Vitozzi complied. A moment

passed. Cicaglione scanned him in curiosity. This priest was well known for his sombre devotion, especially to those supreme stars of the Camorra's paradise: The Madonna del Carmine, Saint Anne and Saint Vincent, ever lavishing vast sums for candles to be burned at their altars. Yet it was whispered that above all sacred books, Don Ciro preferred the Koran since it promised him the voluptuous, rose-shadowed eternity of the Houris! And his revenues —where did this supposedly poor priest derive them? How was he able to live in veritable palaces? It was known that he received good pay as Chaplain of the Neapolitan cemeteries—where he rarely celebrated mass though the graveyards were his domain, absolute and unique. He received moneys from funerals, from selling loaves of Saint Anthony, from turning miracles for the credulous or assembling votes for politicians . . . even from selling corpses to medical students and bones of infants to *maghi* (mystics who pursued the black arts within the labyrinths of Neapolitan slums!)

Don Ciro's very start had been made by emptying the alms boxes where the poor placed their mites for the relief of souls in purgatory! Then, entering a seminary, he emerged a priest at twenty. Thereafter his rise was meteoric. At twenty-two he was already in charge of the Carmelite chapel. At twenty-six he was appointed chaplain of the cemeteries, by the Mayor of Naples! As priest he became venerated by the criminal elements, being able,

with a brandish of his glittering crucifix, to stay the waftage to Hell, to charm open the portals of paradise for anyone . . . and the Camorrists, ever haunted, superstitious, delinquent, needed diurnal ablution to insure peace to their troubled souls! A genius, if there ever existed one, was this man—but a perverted one!

"What can I do for you, Father?"

"I come to speak to you, *Cavaliere*, about my *compariello*, Enrico Alfano, who has been unjustly taken away from the enjoyment of Earth's free blessings."

Cicaglione nodded.

"You know, he is my godson, and a little wild. But he is a good boy, I swear to it by the Holy Immaculate!"

Gravely the other retorted, "His record is well known."

"I understand! The Lord enlightens you! You mean, *Signor Cavaliere*, that he is at times inclined to take the law in his hands? But what is that? You must think of the life out of which he has risen—as I too! And I am sure that, at bottom, he is a man of good heart—a little wild, I admit, but not a criminal."

The examining magistrate compressed his lips, while Don Ciro paused and sat at attention as if waiting for him to utter something. Receiving no answer, the priest continued, "And his brother Girotiello, and Ibello, and Giovanni Rapi—they are all

good men. Haven't they given much to charity in this poor city of ours?"

Cicaglione lowered his head, musing. Then, looking up, he asked, "But what is it you wish, Father?"

"I request justice."

"That is what I am trying to do."

"Ah, but *Signore*, can we not be mistaken at times, even in our conception of what justice is?"

"And in this instance, your idea of justice would be—to free them?"

The priest bowed. "Nothing less."

"I am sorry, though. But I must follow the course which seems to me right. I have my own duty to perform."

"That I realize; yet I would advise you, in the name of justice, human and divine, to free those poor unfortunates, for they are nothing but the victims of circumstance." This was uttered in a rich voice that contained just the very slightest tinge of menace.

After some deliberation, Cicaglione shook his head. Don Ciro, he knew, had powerful friends in Rome, both in the Vatican and in the circles of the Quirinal; and what he said carried strong moral weight. But it could not be. The double murders had created too much stir throughout the kingdom. It could not be. "I am sorry, Father. But this affair is a little too serious. It would be unwise, to say the least, for me to free these Cuocolo suspects. I am very sorry."

Don Ciro smiled benignly; one would almost think that his request had been granted. Again making the sign of the cross, he murmured, "The Lord will enlighten you, my son!"

And gently, serenely, Don Ciro withdrew. For once his word had not been enough immediately to free a prisoner!

Cicaglione remained there puzzled, shaking his head again and again, shuddering perceptibly.

CHAPTER 6

Don Ciro Vitozzi again! It was night, a few days later and Cicaglione was about to retire when the graveyard priest was announced. Appearing, almost out of breath, into the golden sphere of lamplight, an unwonted color on his sallow cheeks, the priest immediately blurted: "I have found out who the murderers of the Cuocolos are!" Crouched in his dark cassock, head thrust forward, in a divulging gesture that was half appeal, he seemed like some pleading matron emerged from a canvas of Reni or Salvator Rosa.

"The murderers? You know them? Who are they?"

In answer the Padre raised his right hand, fingers opened—and there were sharp shadow thrusts on the wall behind. A sacerdotal calm pervaded his features. "Peace, peace, my son. It is a secret which I cannot reveal." In a hesitant, roundabout manner, he hinted that he had learned the facts through the confessional.

"Well. . . .?"

"A secret of which I, as a minister of the church, cannot break the seal."

"But you know who they are?" asked Cicaglione impatiently. He felt tired and irritable.

"I dare not say."

"Are they the Alfanos and the other two?"

"I am not permitted to say . . . and yet I feel it my duty to protect the innocent. Surely Our Lady of Sorrows will understand and forgive."

Cicaglione drummed his figures on the back of an armchair. Behind the table and its blurring lamplight, facing him, hovered the ghost-like priest.

Soft words bubbled out of the thin womanly lips, "But, *Cavaliere*, if you were to interrogate a certain man—who can easily be found—you might learn that *something* which you wish to know."

"Who is this man, Padre?"

The priest shuddered. "I fear that I am not doing the right thing." He lowered his head, swept the lower portion of the room with his glowing womanly eyes, and murmured in Latin. His shadow against the wall gradually slanted.

Cicaglione urged him to speak out. If it came to a matter of justice, of aiding the innocent, there could be no wrong in the course he was taking. . . . The Padre hesitated. . . .

All at once their shadows appeared like huge painted petals smeared around the walls, the lamp a golden heart, and they two hungry bees seeking to filch the truth from each other. . . . They sparred . . . they parried. . . . No. No. The Padre refused to continue. . . . But this was only at first. . . . Then he admitted that the man was one of his penitents. And finally he uttered the name of this

person who could clear up the mystery: Giacomo Ascrittore!

Ascrittore. Hm. The magistrate pursed his lips. He knew something, in a vague way, about a fellow of that name: a man occasionally employed as spy by the civil police. Associated with him was another informer, Antonio Parlati. Both had criminal records for small offences.

"So this man, this Ascrittore, will be able to tell me the truth?"

A profound sigh escaped the priest. "My son, the Lord will guide you. Act as you feel best. All I wish is that I may be the instrument for freeing the innocent and bringing the real culprits to justice."

And making a sign of the cross, Don Ciro passed noiselessly out into the dimness, his lips set in a most serene smile. . . . From below came the hushed voice of a servant . . . the swishing of a well-grooved door. . . .

Early the next morning, before acting on the priest's information, Cicaglione determined to make inquiries. He discovered a surprising fact. On June 12 this very Ascrittore had submitted an affidavit to the police at Bari, far off in Apulia, claiming to have evidence concerning the Cuocolo mystery, and saying that he wished to have it brought to the attention of the Neapolitan authorities, but that he was afraid to do so personally.

Immediately Cicaglione caused Ascrittore to be brought before him.

The spy was a well-set-up man, of plethoric complexion, with high, ruddy cheek bones and eyes mischievously alert.

Cicaglione began, "My man, I have had you called at the advice of your friend, Padre Vitozzi.

Up sprang the spy's gaze in a brilliant instant. "Vitozzi, Your Honor? I do not know any such person."

The examining magistrate nodded. This was probably the proper attitude for a betrayed penitent to maintain. "It is unnecessary to simulate, sir. Don Ciro Vitozzi has told me everything."

"Told you!—What, Your Honor?—About what?"

In a few curt phrases Cicaglione gave him the gist of what the priest had implied, and dropped heavy hints that he knew still more, adding, "It will be best for you, my dear fellow, to come out with the entire truth!"

Far from showing any resentment at this apparent betrayal of his confession, the spy's flushed features bent sideways in an admiring pose.

The magistrate sat down at his desk and motioned him to a chair. Ascrittore obeyed.

"Now," began Cicaglione, leaning forward, "Let us get this straight. In your affidavit to the Questore at Bari, you claimed to know the murderers of the Cuocolo couple?"

"I did, Your Honor."

"Who are they?"

The spy sighed tremulously, hesitating.

"Well—speak up!"

"Three ex-convicts," murmured Ascrittore.

"Namely—?"

"One of them is called de Angelis—Tomasso de Angelis. He has a friend called Gaetano Amodeo. And the third is Ciro Maresca—maybe you've heard of him?"

Cicaglione nodded. Maresca enjoyed quite an international reputation for crime.

"These are the three who, you believe, murdered the Cuocolos?"

"Yes, Your Honor."

"Why?"

"Well—it was for robbery—and also for revenge. You see this man de Angelis had it in for Cuocolo. And if you see de Angelis, you'll find that he has a cut in his leg."

"Hm. We'll come to that later. How do you know that this de Angelis had a grudge against Cuocolo?"

The spy shuddered. "I tell you the truth, Your Honor, I'm afraid for my life, now that I'm telling you this. De Angelis is a terribly dangerous fellow. And he told a friend of mine that it's going to be difficult to capture him."

"My dear fellow, I do not see what you have to fear. You are under our protection" (the spy smirked) "and we're ready to make a swift cleanup

on this matter. Now tell me just what your reasons are for accusing de Angelis."

Ascrittore nodded, "Do you wish me to make a regular statment?"

"Yes sir. That is best." Cicaglione picked up a pad and a pencil, and inscribed notes while the spy spoke:

"On the second of June a man came to the janitress of my house and asked for me. I was out.

"The bell to my apartment rang and my wife asked, 'Who is it?'

"The visitor mentioned my name, and she let him climb to the middle of the stairs and again asked him what he wanted. He said that he wished to speak 'with Ascrittore.' My wife insisted, 'But who are you?'

"He said, 'I am Tomasso de Angelis,' and added that he would return the next day."

Cicaglione interrupted. "How long have you known this man de Angelis?"

"Well, you see, once when I was young, I got into a little mess and was locked up in the Carmine prison. I met him there—that was during the winter of 1891—fifteen years ago. But I hadn't seen him since."

"I see. Proceed."

"He did not return the next day; but he came on the fourth. When I saw him I was greatly surprised, for he had been a stalwart fellow. But now

he had cut off his mustaches and looked haggard. He was dressed like a seaman. He spoke to me of a crime which had cost him twenty-seven months' imprisonment because he'd been betrayed by 'the real murderer of the priest La Mura'—you know that 'job' where such a lot of gold treasure was taken, and he said that he knew all about that murder because he was in Gragnano at the time 'buying flour'! (*comprando del semolino*: that is to say in the language of the Camorra, doing light robberies).

"While we were talking, I noticed that the hilt of a dagger was sticking out from the inside pocket of his jacket. I said, 'look out or you'll lose it.' And de Angelis, in answer looked me straight in the eye and buttoned up the jacket. Then he asked me, 'Are you acquainted with *Il Figlio di Papa*?'" (the Papa's Boy) "I answered, 'No.'

" 'How is that—haven't you ever known Gennaro Cuocolo?'

" 'By name, yes; and in fact I hear that they are not talking so very well about him.'

"De Angelis laughed softly. 'Do you know that Cuocolo has just set up a very rich apartment—it cost him more than fifteen thousand lire—? Well,' tapping at the dagger, 'I have an account or two to settle with him.'

"After this, cutting the matter short, he asked me if I could let him have a room for two or three days. Lately I've been thinking that this was only a ruse

on his part to help him establish an alibi after the Cuocolos had been killed. Especially when I read about the murders two days later.

"My suspicions grew; and after ten days had passed without any more sign of de Angelis, I decided to go to my patron, the Questore of Bari, and tell him everything.

"The night after my return from Bari, I, with my wife and two ladies—neighbors of ours—were seated in our *salotto* talking quietly when the door was flung open and a man dressed as a coal-heaver appeared on the threshold. He had his face all blackened. He said, 'Good evening.'

"We had all turned to see who it could be. I was paralyzed. But, summoning courage, I arose and walked toward him, saying in an easy manner, to allay any suspicions on the part of our neighbors, 'I have weighed the coal already.' And nodding to him I went out into the hall. We walked up to the next floor, which by luck was unoccupied. And there I asked de Angelis—for it was he—what he wanted. He told me that he had a wound in his leg, that he had been forced to run away from his hiding place in Castellamare and come to Naples in this disguise because somebody had betrayed him to the police. I asked, 'About what?' He answered gruffly, 'Never mind.' And then he asked me to let him hide in my house for the night. Meanwhile my poor wife was shaking with fear, not knowing what this fellow's intentions were; and the ladies who were

with her asked to be excused, but she begged them to remain.

"I told de Angelis that I had no room for him; and also that my wife was very much afraid of strangers.

"He insisted, and I allowed him to sleep on the landing upstairs giving him a woolen bed cover. The next day, before dawn he was already gone. The blanket smelled of iodoform which, I supposed, came from the wound on the leg. I immediately wrote to my patron at Bari."

Cicaglione interrupted, "Why did you not let my office know, here, in Naples? We might have caught him then and there."

The spy's face assumed a queer expression. "You know, *Cavaliere*, this man de Angelis is a dangerous criminal. And I have to be very careful how I reveal things."

Cicaglione inclined his head and motioned him to continue.

Ascrittore said: "Later, the following day, de Angelis came to me again, clean shaven and undisguised, and asked permission to come into my house and doctor his leg which he said was hurting him badly. My wife, who was still much afraid of him, gave him some salves and a bandage. His wound, on the left leg, was more than four centimeters long and very deep.

"I observed to him, 'You're in a bad shape, man. How did you get it?'

"In answer he looked me sharply in the eye and muttered, 'Take care how you talk, Don Giacomo, that's all I say: take care.'

"After this he went away. Then I wrote another letter to the Questore at Bari."

Cicaglione commented dryly: "You have all your facts at your finger tips."

"Yes, Your Honor, I have. You see, I've been prepared to make a statement for the last two weeks." The spy's expression was a honeyed smear.

"And was that the last time you saw de Angelis?"

"No, Your Honor. I saw him last Friday down on the quay near the military port. He was standing there dressed as a seaman, and he looked like the captain of a fishing smack. Together with him was a short chunky man. When he saw me, he came up and started to talk. And then he turned and pointed to the other man, and said, 'Do you see that little fellow? That is the only friend I've got in this world. I don't trust any other goddam son-of-a-bitch.' And then the short fellow came up. He was Amodeo. He's not tall, but is tough and broad for his size. And he started to talk too, and he dropped some heavy hints on how the three of them: he, de Angelis, and Maresca, had 'fixed the Papa's Boy.' I could see that they were both a little drunk. After that I loaned them some money because I wanted to keep in touch with them. I expected an answer from the Questore at Bari. But I have received no word from him as yet."

"And have you any idea where these suspected men are hiding?"

"Your Honor, up Poggio Reale near the cemetery, I am sure."

"Poggio Reale, hey?"

"Yes, *Cavaliere*—that is quite surely the place."

"Very well."

CHAPTER 7

THEREUPON the magistrate acted. He communicated with his colleague, de Filippis at Torre Annunziata, where Ciro Maresca lived with his aged mother, and caused that man's arrest while de Angelis and Amodeo were ferreted out of Poggio Reale.

At the same time he went before the Camera Consiglio of Naples, presided over by Cavaliere Silvio Petrone, and consisting of himself and his brother magistrate Colosino, and obtained an order for the release of the Mimi-a-Mare supper party.

To Cicaglione the whole mystery of the double murder was rapidly clarifying. What had seemed to have portentous significance was now proving to be merely a matter of revenge and robbery among thieves.

When next he saw Don Ciro, Cicaglione said smilingly, "You were indeed quite right."

Of course. All this *causerie* about a Camorra was fantastic, to say the least. That infamous organization had been long rooted out of Naples. Why of course! These were only scattered bands of criminals squabbling among themselves!

Meanwhile the new prisoners were examined. It

disconcerted *Cavaliere* Cicaglione not a little when de Angelis, Amodeo and Maresca established convincing alibis for the night of June the fifth!

De Angelis admitted having a wound on the leg; but claimed that it had been received years before while gathering shell fish on the prison island of Ustica. The wound, he alleged, had reopened early in May. Doctors who examined it said that this was probably so, and that it could hardly have been caused by a penknife.

Cicaglione felt in a daze and held hands to his head; the issues had been confused; everything seemed to be suddenly tangled anew, the unravelling had led to a further bewilderment.

Amodeo, a little man who stood very straight as though to eke out the last iota of his height, when interrogated, treated the manner lightly. He declared that, besides an iron-bound alibi, the questura had another reason why he could not possibly be mixed up in the Cuocolo affair.

"That was an aristocratic crime," he asserted, "I never trouble such persons."

He appeared to be proud of his own caste in the realms of thuggery, his plane of action out of which he neither dared nor wished to wander, and he drew his neck up straight.

Maresca, examined, answered in like fashion and, although a notorious malefactor, succeeded in convincing even the examining magistrate that he had had nothing to do with the Cuocolo affair.

As a result of these alibis, the men had to be released, but under strict surveillance. Cicaglione, while checking up their statements, felt queerly disconcerted. Had he been tricked?

That very day, toward twilight, he summoned Don Ciro Vitozzi to headquarters. Faltering, drawing his dingy cassock about him, the Padre entered the dim spacious chamber.

Cicaglione turned on the light; and the sudden glow illumined the priest's ivory face and iron-rimmed glasses, behind whose blurring crystal burned those coal-black eyes, now fixed gravely upon him.

"Don Ciro," began the magistrate impetuously, "You have misinformed me!"

"May the Almighty forbid!" Fumbling, crossing himself, the priest began to murmur something in Latin.

"Those three, de Angelis, Amodeo and Maresca, have furnished me with convincing alibis. Maresca, I am sure, had nothing to do with the case. And I think the others were probably innocent of it, too. Now what is the meaning of all this insinuation and talk that you have been purveying me and my officers? What does this mean, sir?"

Slowly, Don Ciro thrust his head forward, with his aquiline nose like the beak of a huge, black bird of prey. His voice was soft, velvety, almost feminine, "But are you so sure, *Cavaliere*, of their alibis?"

"So far as I can see, they are rather hard to break."

"But they will be broken!" exclaimed the priest straightening up his head on rigid neck. "They will be broken! Truth will triumph—the Lord will see to that!"

"How do you know?"

"How do I know? If they are the real criminals—flaws will be found in their alibis. Do you think they would have set about on their murderous design without first fabricating alibis? The very fact that they show such seemingly infallible ones will, in the end, show their guilt. Their own cleverness, *Signor Cavaliere*, will prove their undoing!"

Cicaglione was unconvinced. "I don't know if I have done right."

"Why? Can they escape?"

"No; they are watched night and day."

"Then it is only a matter of time, when flaws will be found in their alibis. Meanwhile, my dear *Cavaliere*, may the Lord guide you aright! Truth will triumph—truth must triumph in the end. And I promise you whatever aid I can."

The magistrate nodded gloomily.

Don Ciro arose to take his leave. As he stood in black silhouette against the window with the dull red glow of dusk behind him, a sharp expression passed across his face. Cicaglione drew in his breath, startled, and peered again at the priest's countenance. What was that expression—eh? The corners of the large mouth had twisted up, the eyes had glittered behind their iron-rimmed glasses . . .

for just an instant the priest's visage was set in a triumphant leer! It was the outward sign of victory which this strange creature had felt over the magistrate. But only a flash it was—the very next moment Don Ciro's features had reassumed their mask of unctuous priestliness.

Raising his hand, weaving a sign of the cross, murmuring "*Benedette sia*," the Padre vanished. And Cicaglione was left staring moodily at the window, where the red glow turned swiftly sombre, and only a few veins of crimson across these piled up hills of gloom spoke of the hell-fires smoldering beneath.

Banging his fist on the table, the magistrate stood up. After all, the priest might still be right. Though the three new prisoners had had to be released, they were under surveillance and could be rearrested instantly. He was sure that flaws would be found in their alibis. In the interim, he decided to mention nothing of this new development to the other members of the Camera Consiglio—not until he had fully verified or broken the alibis.

Meanwhile, the members of the Mimi-a-Mare supper party had been set free. And what a celebration there was!

A warm sun glowed over Naples on the afternoon of July 17, 1906, but its heat was tempered somewhat by a cool breeze from the bay; and it was a gala crowd—a motley mob in festive array—which

assembled at the high gates of Sant'Efremo prison, for news had gone forth that the "five martyrs," not forgetting Erricone's coachman, were to be released!

First appeared Ciro Alfano, walking arm in arm with lanky Ibello. They passed into the crowd unobserved. Then came the great Erricone, with his superior attitude of silence, followed by the cringing, humble figure of Iacovitti. A roar of cheering burst from the crowd, "*Viv' Erricon'*! *Viv' Erricon'*!" Raising hands, throwing caps into the air, the women waving colored handkerchiefs, they began to form a triumphal parade to escort their hero down to the lower section of the city. Just at that moment, out stepped the smiling, mellifluous Rapi, in smoking jacket, and fantastic waistcoat, with gray mustaches waxed and perfumed, and a big May-rose in his lapel, as though ready to set out on an amorous rendezvous! The crowd was hushed for a moment; whispers passed around, "*'o prufessore! 'o prufessore*!"

On the steps Rapi paused and delivered a little speech:

"I was very sure of my release. I said so to the *Guidice d' Istruzione*—my dear friend, the *Cavaliere* Cicaglione—from the very first. I said to him, 'By arresting me you offend yourself, justice, and the majesty of the law.' He has now come around to my opinion. Thanks, thanks, my friends!"

Immediately started the triumphal parade, a horde, scarcely human, quasi-oriental, ogreish, seeth-

ing across the upper city like a mottled outpouring of lava, volcanic, horrible, with gibbous backs, blinking owl-eyes, slouch of gorillas and wolves—thousands upon thousands—howling their joy, their faces disfigured, not by anger or lust, but by joy—wild joy that Erricone, the great Erricone, had been freed—their expressions rendered thereby more sinister, more hideous. Wide-humped shoulders bounded along; meagre youngsters with bony tattooed arms; big *bravi* with hairy breasts—all manner of *lazzaroni*, alien to the vast peaceful majority of citizens, being rarely seen by day, now called out under the golden sun by the gala event: Erricone was free! Free!

What strange tribe had descended upon Naples during the night—troglodites swarming out of weird subterranean honeycombs, grotesques and gargoyles swarming down from their dim nooks in medieval apses, speaking a dialect different from that of the smiling, gracious Neapolitans, using outlandish expressions, words impregnate with mystic, dark meanings, employing an intricate sign language to punctuate their speech? . . . A brutalized, degraded race, breeding in the filth of Neapolitan slums, in the labyrinths of decayed palaces, disputing their dens and meals with rodents and vermin; here they poured, howling their joy and terrorizing the upper city! Beholding them, one might more easily understand that mysterious priest born out of their ranks, Don Ciro Vitozzi, whom they

still called "Guardian Angel!" Conquered foes to the normal world they were: distorted in everything, in mind, feeling, outlook: odd of view, admiring the white-slaver who derived the most lucre out of his women, as we of the upper world might admire the possessor of champion race-horses! The sole law they recognized—down in their slums where they numbered at least one hundred thousand, was that represented by the great Erricone and his lieutenants! The law of the Camorra! Nothing else counted!

But first the "martyrs" celebrated among their friends of higher rank, the social stratum in which was said to exist a "Higher Camorra"—that rumored counterpart of the Lower, or criminal brotherhood. Evening saw Rapi making a round of visits to his friends the journalists on whom he had often, with the ostentation of a Maecenas, lavished forgettable loans; and early next morning the city newspapers published his portrait with front-page stories of "The Professor's" rehabilitation. That same evening the Caffe Gambrinus, the Caffe Turco, and the Caffe Fortunio where the élite gathered, were in festa, for there the two Alfanos and Ibello entertained their friends and described the iniquity that had been laid upon them by the authorities of Naples. The "martyrs" received ovation after ovation as they passed from one restaurant to another . . . and in the gloomy depths of Vicaria and Mercato, groups

collected, jolly from the day of feasting; people called from the windows the great news. Everybody was happy. No thought was given to de Angelis, Amodeo, and Maresca, who would undoubtedly be let go. The one prevailing idea was that the whole affair of the Cuocolos was buried in the archives of the court and would soon be forgotten. A little more red tape . . . and then . . . oblivion. . . .

Such, indeed, was the traditional and—as we shall see—the usual destiny of Camorrist crimes. But even as the crowds in the low quarters of the city were celebrating, a counterforce was already at work, just as secret as theirs, just as mysterious, just as deadly. There were other eyes, outside Naples, safely outside its mystic cirque of intrigue and peril, that were closely watching the unfolding of this drama which had caught the unwelcomed attention of the entire nation. . . . Other eyes had seen this smudging of truth, this confounding and bewildering of authority in a maze of conjecture, hearsay, and calumny! And while the "martyrs" were being daily feasted and banqueted by their friends among the élite . . . a soft-footed enemy had been set loose in their midst, the very devil of a man, a nemesis, more wily than Padre Vitozzi, more tenacious than Erricone, more plausible than Rapi!

BOOK TWO

AN UNKNOWN CARABINIERE

CHAPTER 1

It was the last day of July and very hot. The two old attendants at the entry of the record chambers in the tribunal building of San Domenico Suriano, kept mopping the sweat from their brows. Once in a while they would peer inside, in a sort of placid curiosity at a figure bent over a table set in the dim, close hall between stacks of records.

The attendants winked at each other and grinned. Both had the same idea. That fellow must be something of a fool, to turn up such old and forgotten tomes. And in such weather, too.

"How would you like to be sitting now, Raffele, up at the *campo*, under a pine tree, drinking some cool, sparkling, ruby *barbera*?"

"Keep quiet," mumbled the other, "you'd better tell that to the young busybody inside."

Again they gazed within and grinned. How the deuce could anyone keep fingering over musty records in such weather?

The young clerk at the table kept bent over, oblivious of the attendants' idle interest. From behind he seemed rather broad-shouldered. Once in a while he too, would look up, sigh deeply, and wipe the sweat that dewed his forehead. He was quite a hand-

some man, Roman featured, with sharp gray eyes, skin very smooth, white; curly chestnut hair and little slip of a brown mustache:—a sort of face that one would turn to look at twice.

The attendants knew something about him. He had been sent from the Department of Justice at Rome with orders to look up a number of records; and he was most damnably conscientious: taciturn, with a faint smile for everybody, and always hurrying from one room to another, even in this most abominably hot summer weather. "These northerners," mused the attendants, "They don't know when to stop and take a nap."

Uh-hum . . . Yawning, the two old attendants slumped back on the bench to wait resignedly for closing hour. From within came the scratch of a pen as the terribly conscientious young clerk scrawled something on a sheet of foolscap.

Writing in a large bold hand, he was inscribing a series of notes, which, looking over his shoulders, the attendants (and wouldn't they have been lifted out of their lethargy?) might have read:

"Name: de Marinis, alias, ''o Mandriere,' ('The Cattle Driver'). Alias comes from his having worked as youth in a slaughter house. No visible source of income. Is reputed to squander vast sums. Is noted as a fashion plate. Spends months of each year at Monte Carlo and Paris. Is an ex-convict, and yet is not under police surveillance.

"History: Born in Naples, in 1867. At fourteen

convicted for robbery. Name appears repeatedly thereafter on the police reports, only to be lost sight of in the records of the courts.

"In 1891 he killed Guiseppe Aurino, and was sentenced only to thirteen months and ten days' imprisonment! In 1892 he received only six months for being an accomplice in murder. In 1894 an incarceration of eighteen months for extortion. In 1897 given four years for stabbing with intent to kill Eugenio Gilio. Served three years of that. Shortly after being freed was rearrested for assaulting a policeman and locked up for three days. Is now a power in the political world!

"Remarks: The lightest sentences against this man have been imposed for crimes committed against reputable citizens or the police, while those against fellow malefactors have been more heavily dealt with."

This must have been the result of his day's searching of records. With pen poised in air, he read over the short report carefully and then signed it "C. F."

Footsteps came from behind. Deliberately, the young clerk closed his notebook, rolled it up and slipped it into a sort of brief-case. The footsteps came nearer. He arose leisurely and turned, sighing deeply with a grateful intake of air after his intent, bent-over position.

One of the door attendants was approaching.

"Sorry, young fellow. It's ten to four."

The clerk smiled and nodded.

"Worked hard to-day?" asked the attendant.

"Not so much. . . ." ("Holy smokes!" thought the attendant, "Not so much. Wonder what happens when this fellow works hard!")

A bell rang. It was the signal for the closing of the offices.

The clerk picked up his brief case and hat. Several other clerks came out from the regions behind the dim rows of files. One of them nodded to him. The young fellow who had signed his name as "C. F." smiled pleasantly and acknowledged the greeting. When he smiled one noticed that his eyes grew soft, almost watery.

Leaving behind the *Tribunale*, sauntering down Largo Gesù, brief-case in hand, the clerk came out upon Piazza Dante, where he lingered for a car. It arrived after a short while, and he boarded it. And casually, as the tram left the square, he turned to scan the spot where he had stood.

Right in back of Saint Elmo Castle spread the heights of Vomero, an enchanting, semi-rural section, overhanging the very heart of the city, where villas and white cottages nestle among besieging green. From there one can see the whole of Naples stretched beneath, with the bay opening off toward the shining south and Vesuvius brooding opposite. Near the edge of the precipice there winds a dusty white lane bordered by villas and garden walls. Up this road, sifting across the faint, fantastic shadows of olives

and poplars, came trudging the young, broad-shouldered clerk, swinging his brief-case idly against his thighs. He had gotten off the car at the intersection further down.

It was sultry, sirocco weather. The air stuck, deathly, thick. In the west the sun had vanished into a pallor that suffused that whole half of the sky. Overhead the blue was being smudged as if by long thin traces of smoke. The lane might have led across a cemetery for all the signs there were of life around it. Only a thrush twittered from somewhere behind a high stucco garden wall. Up trudged the clerk, his fine features shining with sweat.

After a short walk he paused at the garden gate of a small villa perched on the edge of the precipice. He opened it with a large old-fashioned key, and stepped into a small yard filled with banks of potted flowers, young orange trees, roses, carnations, swinging purple bloom. The house in front was not so large, and must have been built during Spanish vice-regal times. The walls were covered with primrose-yellow plaster, the roof with red tiles. All the decorative fancy of the architect seemed to have been concentrated around the doorway. Over it spread a sinuous mantle of blue and green terra cotta in whose center, sigil-like, bulged a sleeping heron, crescent-winged, head buried in its breast; and from each side, staring upon it in awe, jutted two winged cherub heads, mouths marking an oval surprise. The door was of massive black panelling.

For a moment the clerk hesitated inside the garden gate. He bent his head slightly forward as though to listen. His bright gray eyes wandered over the building. Its vivid hue was just a shade lighter than that of the sickly sky behind it, so that it almost seemed to float against the checkered panorama of city, sea and volcano beyond. Then, with an almost imperceptible shrug, he walked up, pulled out a key and set it into the lock.

The door creaked open. He stepped into a wide hallway. It was dim and comparatively cool, illuminated from a small arched window, set high up, to one side. Straight ahead was a tiny altar over which stood a copy of some fourteenth century masterpiece: a sinuous virgin with cross features, posturing, head inclined, before a lilied pond, while behind her, floating in the deepest of amethyst skies, glittered the battlements of a gilded medieval heaven.

Before this altar the young man paused for a moment, his lips fixed in a strange smile. Then he passed on into the large room to the right. This room overlooked the city.

He sat down at the oval center table. Less and less light was coming through the window. The sky without was thickening swiftly. Long gray shoals of mist were forming everywhere. A sudden strong wind was whipping the trees of the surrounding gardens.

For a long while the young broad-shouldered clerk sat there. Impatiently he kept looking at his watch.

He rose. He stood now at the window and surveyed the darkening city. Wheeling about he crossed the room and stood at the window which gave upon the garden, the wall and the lane beyond. Here he remained for a long while. Several times he shook his head, and his eyes narrowed as though with worry. He apparently was awaiting someone, and was uncertain whether this someone would come. There was, in his attitude, just the slightest hint of a man in the face of danger.

An hour passed. He now sat again at the table. He opened the brief-case and pulled out several folders. Keenly he scanned several pages. Especially did he read and re-read the one which he had written that afternoon, that series of notes concerning a person called "The Cattle Driver."

It had gotten gloomy. . . . As though obeying an occult signal he again jumped up and walked to the window overlooking the road. His eyes brightened. He leaned forth eagerly. Two men, both dressed in light gray, were approaching the house. On them his eyes were fixed brilliantly.

The two men paused in front of the garden gate. It had been left ajar. They nodded to one another and entered. One of them was somewhat below the average height, slim-waisted, with delicately chiselled features, olive skin and soft brown eyes. Only from behind would one notice that his shoulders were rather wide-spanned and military-like, and that his head was set finely on a strong neck.

The other newcomer was a giant, a dark, strapping fellow, now jaunting across the flagstones of the short garden walk in careless fashion. His face was massive, square, bronzed, bisected by huge black mustaches, and his eyes held fire and humor.

"At last!" exclaimed the clerk, and, without waiting for them to knock, rushed to open the door. They came up the front step. He greeted them. "Come in."

Now, shutting the door behind them, the two newcomers drew up straight in front of the broad-shouldered clerk. And clicking their heels together, they gave him the military salute.

He asked, returning their salute: "Have you decided to consider my offer?"

"We have, Captain!"

CHAPTER 2

A QUARTER hour later found the three sitting absorbed in conversation around the oval table. A bronze swinging lamp in the center threw their features in high light. The man who had been saluted and addressed as "Captain" was leaning his elbows on the table and talking in a low, grave monotone. The two newcomers kept staring intently at him. Once in a while the dark giant would pass a hand through his mass of curly black hair and snort in astonishment at some point he made.

It was a strange tale he was recounting, and a stranger offer he was making them. An offer which, if accepted, would in most likelihood mean death for both.

One of the threads of this tale we already know. The other started from an incident that was almost ludicrous:

Shortly before the Cuocolo murders, a grand Lady of the realm was being driven through Villa Nazionale—that lovely strip of park skirting the bay. She was smiling and contented for, lo! royalty was to have tea with her at five!

Then ahead of her, swelling out of the white Aquarium's shadow, loomed a prodigious sight: a

big, dark man, sitting upright on horseback, nose high-tilted, all asmile at himself and the world. This —though the grand Lady knew it not,—was de Marinis, "The Cattle Driver," political boss of one of Naples' fourteen districts, plumed satrap of the rumored Camorra! Camelias in lapel, paunch streaked with chains of gold, fingers diamond-bedecked—he provided an ocular feast, astride his blooded Arabian steed, brandishing a silver-handled whip. Pedestrians had stopped to one side of the trottoir to gaze off at the still turbulent Vesuvius. . . . The great chief, noticing them through the corner of his eyes, imagining that they had paused to admire his passage, smiled inwardly and exalted his dumpy nose a little more, assuming the jaded expression of a *Grand Seigneur*!

Just then something terrible happened. . . . Who was to blame?—the Lady's coachman? It was hard to tell, for instantly all the eyewitnesses fled. There was a collision—and the mighty politician toppled down and rolled ignominiously in the dirt!

He sprang to his feet and rushed toward the carriage, shaking a hefty fist. A horrible expression had twisted his features, which were naturally quite ugly, what with two scars cut jaggedly across the swarthy cheeks. His mouth opened and from among the yellow teeth there came—Mercy!—what a black torrent of vituperation! "You this—and you that!" Poor Lady! Never had she imagined the existence of such language! In a darksome whirl

were thrown her ancestors, the saints, the laws, her person, her virtues:—all derided, insulted, outraged by this unspeakable villain so suddenly unjaded out of his lofty perch!

"Stop! Stop, vile person!" exclaimed the grand Lady.

"I'll stop for you—you. . . ." the rest is unmentionable. He even threatened—and he could do it—to have her arrested for being a—Oh heavens!

Clapping hands to her ears, the Lady pleaded with her coachman to summon an officer.

But the patrolman stationed at the corner, as soon as he saw the collision, wheeled about and marched up a side street, preferring to let the grand Lady and the big chief fight it out between themselves.

And then, just as the grand Lady, half-fainted, was sinking back among her cushions, there came a sound, paaaaf! and—*horribile dictu*—she felt something hit her face. Out of his yellow teeth he had spat upon her—upon her—the Princess Letitia, grand Lady of the realm riding to drink tea with royalty!

The rest was a nightmare drive, half aswoon, toward her palace, revival by her servants and tea with the Duke of Aosta at five.

What bit of this shocking story could be repeated, the Lady whispered behind her fan to the King's cousin. He was rightly indignant. . . . "And no one wished to come to my aid—because he

is said to be a leader of that terrible Camorra!" she moaned, "Oh, how can Naples remain in such a shocking state! Can't we ever get rid of that Camorra?"

The exasperated prince vowed to do something about it. And he did. He went straight to the King at Rome.

The King received the complaint and knitted his brow in deep thought. He knew enough about the Camorra—perhaps more than did any of his ministers. He had been brought up in Naples. He was well aware of the power it wielded in defiance of the government. He also knew that his ministers depended upon the Camorra's political machinery for a majority in Italy's largest city. It was scandalous—and it had often angered him. Sometime before he had had a secret inquiry made—and the report had proved astounding.

The very next day, as though to inflame him still the more, His Majesty received a stinging letter from Mombasa in East Africa.

It was from Prince Luigi, Duke of the Abruzzi—a first cousin of the King and younger brother of the Duke of Aosta—who, in the middle of March, had spent some time in Naples, both with relatives on Capodimonte and at the observatory on the face of Vesuvius, gathering data which should be useful to him in his projected expedition to Central Africa where he intended scaling the volcanic peaks of Ruwenzori in the Mountains of the Moon. Al-

ways fond of adventure, whether amid the frozen snows of the Arctic, the dreary wastes of Sahara, or the human swarms of great cities, Prince Luigi, disguising himself in rags, penetrated some of the mysteries of the Neapolitan underworld. He emerged from that Dantesque descent much the wiser. Shortly after, he sailed for Africa. Arriving there, toward the middle of April, he wrote the King a long letter explaining just what he thought of conditions in Naples. "Naples needs purging very badly," he concluded laconically.

"It certainly does," thought the King as he read his cousin's letter. But what to do was a problem. It was extremely difficult to attack a phantom enemy. Italy was a constitutional country. And, in order to bring the Camorra to justice proof was needed: iron-bound proof that would stand in court. How was he to gather this proof? Whom could he trust? He looked with suspicion on some of the biggest functionaries in the government. He knew that the Camorra venom had been infused through the departments of justice and interior practically to the very top. Camorra spies were everywhere. Any aggressive move on his part would be immediately spotted and reported to the leaders in Naples. They would know how to thwart him; and besides, were any to be brought to trial they would undoubtedly overwhelm the prosecution with cleverly manufactured counter-proof. The Camorra had beaten the government before.

Then the Cuocolo tragedy burst out as the sensation of the press. His Majesty had several unsatisfactory interviews with the Premier who, as Minister of the Interior, held jurisdiction over the civil police. He was told, "The civil police of Naples is in an entirely satisfactory condition. If they have been unable to arrest the real culprits it is due to no fault of theirs." The Minister of Justice gave him a similar account of the Neapolitan judiciary. The King shook his head in anger. Here was a splendid opportunity to fasten something upon that elusive, phantom organization—here was an evident Camorra execution; and yet his very ministers were shrugging their shoulders and insisting that conditions in Naples were first-rate!

There was no time to waste. The King was determined. He would open war upon the Camorra! And he was going to do it single-handed, and in the utmost secrecy! Useless to think of trusting the Neapolitan magistracy or police—both teeming with Camorra corruption and vice! And he thought of the Reali Carabinieri—the Royal Musketeers—that splendid body of military police which was the pride of all law-abiding Italians. It was a select corps, hard to enter and still harder to remain in. Its garrisons were constantly changing: a month in Turin, and then a month in Sardinia or Brindisi. And this fact, combined with their strict military status, made the Carabinieri independent of politics or the wiles of ambitious deputies.

The Minister of War, who commanded the Carabinieri, was called to the Royal presence. The King asked:

"Do you know of any young officer among your Carabinieri whom I can trust on a mission of danger —a mission that may lead to death?"

The minister bowed. "Yes, your Majesty, I do."

"Splendid! And what is the name of this man?"

"Carlo Fabbroni."

"What rank?"

"Captain."

"Where is he stationed now?"

"In Naples, your Majesty."

"In Naples . . . Hm . . ." The King bit his lip. "Has he been there long?"

"Not very. He recently terminated our campaign against the bandit Serra in Sardinia."

"Very well. Have this young officer sent to me."

CHAPTER 3

Captain Fabbroni leaned back in his chair and looked piercingly at his two companions. Then he resumed:

"The orders from His Majesty are these: to gather proof that will allow us, when the time comes, to arrest and convict the leaders of the Camorra. It is actually a war, but a war in which we must work under a severe handicap. On our side we will have the aid of the King. But that only secretly. His Majesty will back us with whatever money we need. But for him to do anything openly, or officially, is out of the question. For action we are left entirely to our own resources. His Majesty has given me Carte Blanche. Opposing us is this mysterious organization numbering thousands of active members, and perhaps hundreds of thousands of sympathisers, counting in its ranks judges, deputies and high officials, all held together by vows of secrecy and mutual aid. His Majesty warned me to exercise the utmost caution in choosing my assistants. I told him that fortunately I did not have to go far afield for them, but that I was lucky in having in my command two *Marescialli* who had served with me against the brigands of Sardinia, both men of great

courage and superior intelligence, both speaking the dialects of the south like natives, and that they were you, Giuseppe Farris, and you, Erminio Capezzutti!"

He fixed his bright gray eyes upon them. Both nodded gravely.

"Now," resumed Fabbroni, "I feel that I have made no mistake in selecting you to be my assistants in this war against the Camorra. It is a dangerous enterprise, and our chances, not only of success, but of coming through alive, are slim. Yet we should be thankful for this opportunity to show our mettle. I have rented this villa here; and it is to be our secret headquarters. Here we are to keep all our papers and documents pertaining to this case, retaining nothing at all in our own rooms at Carabinieri barracks. I will give you each a key to the house. Now as for the course to follow—have you anything to suggest?"

The two hesitated a moment; then the shorter man spoke: "Perhaps you yourself have already made a plan of action, Captain."

Fabbroni admitted: "That I have. And I think that, after all, I had better tell it to you first. Then if you have anything better to offer we can modify it." The two edged forth eagerly as he continued. . . . "During an investigation which I have conducted this last week I find that there are two Camorras, a *Higher* Camorra and a *Lower* Camorra. The Higher Camorra is a loose entente numbering in its ranks merchants, authorities, journalists, nobles

and politicians. It is a huge clique which has been waxing fat on the miseries of this whole region. How far they spread is very hard to say. I personally believe that their influence ramifies all over South Italy. The Lower Camorra, which is a well-knit and powerful organization, is their tool; and a mighty potent tool, I must say! It is the Lower Camorra which invariably does the unlawful work. The Upper Camorra derives the benefit. In return for this they protect the criminal brotherhood. The whole thing is a monster of corruption, extortion and murder; and all that talk of reform five years ago was nothing but surface whitewash!

"Coming down to business: I believe, together with His Majesty, that this Cuocolo murder offers us an opportunity to make wholesale arrests and thus destroy the Lower, or criminal Camorra. Once this should be done, the Upper Camorra would be helpless, for it would lose the one omnipotent tool which it has habitually employed for its nefarious ends. It is the same as though we were to destroy the roots of a tree. The Lower Camorra forms the root-structure working in darkness and crime. It is the one binding element in the entire upgrowth."

"That is so," agreed the two.

Fabbroni resumed: "The Cuocolo murder is undeniably a Camorra execution. There are numerous details to which these officials of Naples have been conveniently blinded. Their reports about the

bodies, for instance, overlooked several all-important features. I learned this from one of the policemen who viewed the woman's corpse: The wounds of the wife were similar to those of the husband, that is, of triangular shape. They were made by the huge dagger traditionally employed by the Camorra in an execution. Still more characteristic was the *sfregio* or wound marking the person as a spy or traitor. If given to an honest woman or to a girl, it is made by a razor slash across the cheek; but if given to a female of doubtful character, it is always in the abdomen. The Cuocolo woman had a long circular cut on her abdomen! There is no doubt, then, of the motive; revenge of the Camorra which has, with that characteristic wound expressed its supreme punishment and contempt!

"Now for our own action. I have decided to give each of us three a distinct task. I myself, with documents in proper form, have already begun to probe the archives of the police, courts and prisons, as a clerk sent from the Ministry of Justice in Rome—a fact, however, utterly unknown to that august department. I am gathering documentary proof against the Camorra. And some of the things I have discovered in this past week are really astounding. Why, from 1901 to 1905 there have been thousands of assaults, robberies and murders—and only ten convictions on capital crimes! Just to-day I was looking up the record of that political ward

leader whom they call "The Cattle Driver." He surely cannot complain of his treatment at the hands of the police or judiciary.

"As for you, Farris. . . ." whereupon he turned toward the smaller of the two, "I have sketched out a rather interesting course. You, as gentleman of fashion, son of a Sardinian landowner, with letters of recommendation from eminent personages in Rome, are to enter the charmed circle of Neapolitan aristocracy, get into the good graces of the political leaders, nobles, and merchants, and find out something about the upper ramifications of the Camorra —especially about the ties that bind the Lower and Upper Camorras. I daresay you will enjoy some interesting experiences!"

"I daresay," murmured Farris. His slender build and soft insinuating voice were well suited to the role of dandy; yet a braver man was not alive in all Italy, as he had proven many times during the campaign in his native Sardinia.

"Coming to you, Capezzutti. . . ." and Fabbroni fixed his eyes on the swarthy giant. . . . "I have an equally interesting plan—a plan which will prove worthy of your peculiar gifts." In answer the big man grinned. It was a bluff, bright, jovial expression: Yet a quick observer might have noticed a clever glint that sparkled in Capezzutti's eyes. For this dark giant, so seemingly open and cheery on the surface, was one of the craftiest of men, pad-footed, wily, and moreover, a veritable protean

artist, able to disguise not only his appearance, but his very personality. A man who might say, "I am so-and-so. . . ." and actually believe it. Fabbroni, who had long gauged Capezzutti's unique powers, was now depending upon them for the consummation of his plan. He said:

"Your task, *Maresciallo*, is really the hardest and most dangerous of the three. You are to go down into the criminal world of Naples disguised as Gaetano Serra."

"Gaetano Serra!" Both Farris and Capezzutti started. The smaller man almost leaped to his feet.

"You mean," said Capezzutti calmly, "The man we shot?"

The captain nodded.

During the recent campaign in Sardinia they had trapped and killed the brigand leader Serra. But the Carabinieri had not let the fact be known and it was generally reported that the bandit had escaped and was in hiding.

"You, Capezzutti, can take his clothes, papers, and identity. I believe he was about your size."

Farris interposed, "Yes. Serra was a very big man."

Capezzutti grinned.

"And so," continued Fabbroni, "you are to go down into the underworld of Naples, pretend that you have escaped from the Carabinieri in Sardinia, seek refuge among the Camorrists, and gather the roots of the Honorable Society while Farris and I

will be plucking its fatal fruit in the professional and social life of the city."

Capezzutti nodded and said calmly, "I can do that, Captain."

"Remember, I am depending upon you to pierce the wall of silence—the *Omertà*—which the Camorra has flung around its stronghold."

"I will pierce it."

"Then it is agreed. From now on we must preserve the utmost secrecy and caution. Remember, the Camorra has spies everywhere. So far, outside of ourselves, only the King, and the Minister of War know of this. Our sole safety lies in secrecy. This villa is to be our headquarters. It has a telephone, and is convenient to the city. Here we are to meet periodically, go over data, and compare notes."

Some hours later, having finally agreed upon the numerous details of their plan, the three stood in the dim hallway to take leave of each other. Behind them glimmered the posturing saint and the battlements of medieval heaven. From without came the sound of rain.

They shook hands—these three Musketeers of modern Italy.

"It is agreed," said Fabbroni. "We three are to war upon and destroy the Camorra!"

"Agreed," said Farris.

"Agreed," said Capezzutti.

War upon the Camorra? Only three men? War

upon the most powerful criminal organization the world had ever seen?

The saint behind seemed to be staring crossly at the three Carabinieri for their foolhardiness. Undoubtedly weird doings would be witnessed . . . blood would be spilled. . . .

Out in the garden the runnels of rain gurgled and laughed. . . .

CHAPTER 4

THE fashionable and brilliant club established by Rapi, of which the Duca di Noia was still president, had moved from its luxurious quarters in the Palazzo Lieti to a still more sumptuous suite on Via Toledo where it had become generally known as the Circolo di Napoli. Within its high-wainscoted chambers, which Rapi had furnished with an irresistible voluptuousness of rose sateen and gilt, there gradually became prominent a young and wealthy Sardinian whose engaging simplicity and naive curiosity proved rather amusing to the highly sophisticated leaders of Neapolitan society. He met the Duke there, together with the Barone Amato, the Marchese de Vita, the Conte d'Aquino and was genially entertained by them.

While chatting over decanters of sparkling *barbera* or *lacramichristi*, he learned that they and some of their friends had been mysteriously robbed through information that must have come from servants.

"Naples has become infested with criminals," sighed the white-haired Conte d'Aquino, "absolutely infested!"

Conte Lucchesi Palli, the Duke's nephew, interposed, "Has it not always been so?"

"Never so bad. Whom can we trust any longer?" d'Aquino blew out a whorl of cigarette smoke that rose toward the inverted crystal cone of the chandelier, "In the big robbery which I suffered, my own domestic confessed that she had furnished information to certain friends, but these friends she refused to name. No matter how much they pressed her for an answer, she twisted her eyes with fear, and shook her head, lips crushed tightly together."

"But how can that be," came the Sardinian youngster's sing-song voice. "Did not the woman know that it was her duty to repair the damage she had caused?"

And Farris turned bland, disarming eyes around the room to meet the half-smiles of the others. Had they only known the thoughts drifting behind his placid, provincial visage: the suspicion that much of the information had been gathered at the club itself. But how? By whom? By some of these immaculate gentlemen lounging around the luxurious smoking room, smiling now at him!

At the Zola restaurant, near the Teatro Partenope, Rapi was giving a little luncheon to his friends, including the rich young Sardinian.

At once, in the middle of their cheer, the "Professor" curved his right hand, with a gesture of *bonhomie*, on the shoulder of lawyer Fragala, and lisped, "You have some legal trouble impending with a certain Covelli—"

"Yes—but . . ." the lawyer's eyes opened in astonishment—"Who told you about it?"

A mellifluous smile twisted up Rapi's perfumed mustaches, "My dear fellow, life has become so closely meshed that everything one does, no matter how secretly, is known to the entire world—*n'est-ce-pas?* However," lowering his voice in a sort of friendly gravity, "your affair can be very easily adjusted without all that *ennui* of going to court."

"But how?"

"For you, my friend, with just a slight present of —er—say, two hundred lire."

The lawyer's eyes sparkled as he asked, "To whom?" It was surely, if possible, a very cheap way out of his predicament.

Up came the professor's delicate hand, and bantering words escaped his lips, "Now, now, do not be so curious—what, my dear fellow? Do you not trust me?"

"Why absolutely, *caro professore*!" And the rest of the company laughed heartily.

Outside the restaurant, Farris lingered with a young journalist. "Great man, this Rapi," he said, admiringly.

The journalist turned a quick glance in his direction. "Do you think so?"

"I certainly do; he seems to be so wonderfully educated. Do you know that at the club he was telling an English nobleman facts about the politics

and history of England of which the Earl himself was ignorant?"

"Hm?"

"And that club—one meets so many excellent people there."

The journalist's eyes glittered. "Yes. But how many fine young men of the aristocracy have been ruined in that very place!"

"How? What do you mean, my dear sir?"

"Is it not a center of incessant gambling?"

"Surely, but what else should gentlemen do to pass the time?"

"Very well. This Rapi, who employs the most skillful *croupiers* outside of Monte Carlo, takes I O U's from young aristocrats, and turns them over —to—to certain associates of his."

Naively curious was the Sardinian's question placed, "And who may they be?"

"Enrico Alfano, his brother Ciro, a certain Fucci —and a despicable creature nicknamed 'The Cattle Driver'—You've heard of them, haven't you?"

"Not exactly; the names sound familiar to me. But I am not sure. What are they?"

"Usurers, loaning money at a terrible rate of interest. A man who falls into their clutches is lost."

"How—lost?"

"Absolutely. If you knew of the hundreds of families ruined—scores driven to suicide. Why, *Signore*, they loan money at twenty percent interest per month! And they know how to collect!"

Farris snickered, "How terrible! Did you also lose money at that club?"

"Yes. I did." And then, realizing that he had let his tongue wag a little too far, the young journalist shifted the subject, joking half-heartedly. But by piecing together other information, the musketeer learned more about these scions of aristocratic families ruined by Rapi: how some of them, to escape the tightening tentacles of the usurers, allowed themselves to be lured into another snare from which there was no escape: how they became *Giovani onorati*—"honored youths" or novices—of an occult, omnipresent association for whom they revealed secrets of their friends' and families' households!

A still more startling fact was ascertained by Farris: Rapi, who squandered cash like a prince, was constantly receiving large sums from America! Whence did it come? Was it revenue from the American Black Hand—blackmail collected from Italo-American "Men of Honor"—Italian former criminals who had emigrated to America, had turned a new leaf, had risen in the world: some to become bankers, newspaper owners and merchants—but who had to pay incessantly for their past? Could it be that Rapi was the means for distributing these moneys to the Neapolitan Camorra and the Sicilian Mafia? The one who told Farris whispered that Rapi had an interest in a New York bank—in which

the Black Hand was also interested! "How intriguing!" thought Farris, "Surely then, this organization ramifies into the New World!" He was not wrong!

A few days later the club members were discussing politics. Rapi, mundane and splendid, was in his element now. He prided himself on being a power in the political world. He sat back, puffed with unspoken words when the others talked, and interspersed the conversation with his own sparkling comments.

They mentioned Count Enzo Ravaschieri, who had successfully run against the radical Ettore Ciccotti in the recent parliamentary elections. "I do not wish to boast," said Rapi slowly, "But I can swear that Ciccotti would hardly have been defeated had it not been for me!"

This was true. The "Professor" was a splendid orator and had added his eloquence to the secret powers which he possessed for influencing the voters. He had vociferously condemned the socialist party and brought tears to his hearers' eyes when he ended his speeches with a eulogy to his eighty-year-old mother, who was passing the twilight of her life at Casagiove, proud in the memory of her illustrious son.

"And did you ever run for public office, *Professore*?" asked the Sardinian, his face aglow with admiration.

Rapi straightened up. "I never have—but—" he drew a notebook from an inside pocket. "Read this, *s'il vous plait.*"

Farris scanned the proffered letter. It was from Prime Minister Tittoni and addressed Rapi in the most cordial and flattering terms, offering him the post of consul at Cairo!

"And you did not accept it!" ejaculated the young man incredulously.

Rapi sighed. "I could not bear to go so far away from my beloved mother. She is so old—and—and has been in such poor health. No. I had not the heart to accept." Sighing again at the thought of his mother around whom Death was folding stealthy wings, Rapi lowered his eyes.

At their secret meeting place on Vomero, the three Carabinieri discussed Rapi, going over in detail the facts amassed. First of all, Fabbroni found that he had no criminal record despite his avowed complicity in the murder of the handsome Camorrist Pasquino! Second: that Rapi's aristocratic friends treated his recent arrest as a joke. He was known to have peculiar acquaintances. "But what of that?" as one of the clubmen told Farris, "what man of such exuberant, universal nature wouldn't have?"

An anonymous letter received at the Carabinieri headquarters engaged their attention for awhile, hinting as it did of Rapi's complicity in the Cuocolo murders. While the "Martyrs" were in duress

anonymous letters had rained into headquarters, coupled with an avalanche of official reports, affidavits and statements all aimed against the ex-convicts de Angelis and Amodeo. Some master hand had directed the persecution for the relief of Alfano and his band, since, after their release, the campaign had suddenly terminated.

This new letter, however, was directed against Rapi. It stated that: shortly before the murders, the Steamship "Margherita" had arrived in Naples with six members of an international brotherhood of murderers known to the police. That these six men were all clean-shaven and had their hair clipped in a manner peculiar to their sect. They had also shown their affiliation by secret gestures and mode of speaking, so as to arouse the suspicion of the writer who was evidently a fellow traveller aboard the liner. He had overheard a conversation between two of them which made him understand this was not a pleasure jaunt, but that the six had been summoned to Naples by the "great master" Rapi, in order to finish off someone.

"What do you think of it?" asked Fabbroni of his aides.

Capezzutti shook his head. "I doubt it. The Neapolitans — especially the Camorrists — would hardly call foreign aid for a murder. And yet"— a theory was forming in his mind. "It may be that they did employ some Camorrists from the suburbs."

"That's quite possible," agreed Fabbroni.

Back in the gay circles of the city, Farris met in society Cardinal Giuseppe Prisco, the Archbishop of Naples, and various prelates in his suite. From them he learned, little by little, that Don Ciro Vitozzi was not the great and holy man he pretended to be, but the *bête noir* of ecclesiastical Naples. While most fawning and unctuous—in spurious guise—toward his superiors, he was a dangerous man when brought to bay, as several of them knew to their cost.

A merry-eyed little lawyer said to the provincial and inquisitive Farris, "Why do you know, I have seen Don Ciro, in the middle of a banquet, red with wine, tear off his cloak, spring to the table—and there do a Saraband, singing dirty songs and making eyes at the girls!"

Another episode in the priest's life was a matter of common gossip. On his rise to opulence he had taken one of his sisters from her position of serving drinks in a wine cellar to become his official housekeeper. One day he introduced a beautiful blonde damsel into the household; and thereafter the sister had been forced to wait upon this newcomer's beck and call and to perform the most humble and degrading service.

She stood it for awhile, and then in a fit of wrath at the young woman's pretensions of superiority, complained to the Cardinal Archbishop. His Eminence ordered the priest to come to the episcopal palace. Don Ciro came. The great prelate feelingly admonished the delinquent son of the Church, and

in so doing impulsively pressed his hand upon the other's breast. He jumped. His fingers had felt there, under the black cloth, not the outline of a breviary but of a revolver!

Don Ciro smiled and whispered significantly: "It is a quicker way for going to Heaven than the other, your Eminence!"

Cardinal Guiseppe Prisco, Archbishop of Naples, turned pale; he was at loss for words; and soon after Don Ciro, lips still set in a sardonic smirk, sauntered from the palace in triumph.

CHAPTER 5

THERE was some sort of hullabaloo down Via Toledo as Farris stepped daintily out on the marble steps that led to the Circolo di Napoli. He leaned against the balustrade, tapping at his feet with a slender cane. Doctor Pastorelli emerged from the portal and joined him.

"What is all that commotion?"

The crowd approached. And then one could see that it was centered about a priest, followed by people—at least a score—who kept at a respectful distance.

"Why," exclaimed the doctor, "It's Don Ciro Vitozzi!"

"And who is he?"

"Don't you know Don Ciro?"

"Never heard of him."

"A very influential prelate. *Guardi*—see how that rabble hangs on his every word!"

The Padre had paused. A mother with her babe had stopped in front of him. Benignly, the priest laid a blessing hand on the child's forehead, while the mother, tears in her eyes, thanked him.

Coming nearer the club, the priest, paused again and raised his hand in blessing while two passing

laborers doffed their caps and did him reverence.

"He must be a very saintly man," observed Farris.

"Oh yes—Oh certainly—Oh undoubtedly!" and the doctor laughed.

Now, just as the priest had drawn abreast of the door, Farris felt a stir on the steps behind him. From a corner of his eyes he noticed that Rapi, shining and perfumed, in fancy smoking jacket, stood on the threshold. The professor's chin was pointed eagerly forward; a sort of half-smile concealed the anxiety in his eyes.

Just as he passed them, Don Ciro turned his head high on straight neck, and cast a biting glance at the entrance of the club. First his eyes clung to the young Sardinian, making an uncomfortable thrill run down the latter's spine; then those strange black orbs settled, for an eloquent instant, upon Rapi. It was a mere flash—but some communication passed between the two with that glance. Not a word was spoken; not a sign that they knew one another. Then, turning aside to smile at a street urchin and to give him some coppers, the mysterious priest passed slowly down the twilight street.

An hour later, in the gloomy, mahogany-panelled library on the second floor of the palace at San Giovanni e Paolo, the Padre sat back in his pontifical Gothic chair, a cryptic smile fixed on his lips. He was thinking. His face was white and humid, as if with fever; but the breath came regularly. He

was thinking. Thought after thought swept through his mind, with a rolling pallor, like far planets viewed by the gods in upper night. . . . Pale-reflecting thoughts they were . . . pale, half-shaped ideas . . . half-discovered . . . incomplete. . . .

His lips remained twisted in that cryptic smile.

Noiselessly, behind the purple, half-drawn curtains of the towering archway that gave upon the next room, a woman passed at intervals, when her crimson skirt smouldered against the dimness like a bell of flame.

Now, with a start, Don Ciro inclined his ear, listening intently. Soft footsteps sounded on the stairs; voices in the *salotto*—and then the curtains were drawn up into cloud-like folds by a woman's plump arm; the silver-tasseled cordon glimmered and danced; and the crimson skirt, which had wavered in the entrance like a bell under the bellying curve of the portiere, withdrew with a swish, as the woman, her breast and face still hidden, passed off into another chamber.

Straightening up, Don Ciro turned his white face toward the entrance where, under the rich clouds of velvet hesitated the immaculate Rapi! "*C'e permesso*?—May I come in, father?"

Serenely raising a hand, the priest motioned him to enter.

Don Ciro began, "Don Giuvà, there is something which is worrying me, and I feel that trouble is in

the air. I thought I would let you know. I have asked my *cumpariello* to come here, and he should arrive any minute."

Rapi was frankly perturbed, he having left his mask of worldliness with his hat down below. "What is it?"

"I am not sure yet. I don't even know what case it concerns, though I have a strong suspicion that it has something to do with that Cuocolo affair."

The professor laughed nervously, saying, "Is it some investigation by the local police which is causing you this concern?"

Don Ciro shook his head and exclaimed in disgust, "The local police—they are—well, you know what they are! No, no, my dear Don Giuvà, a strange rumor has reached me—that someone among the Carabinieri—an unknown—is secretly prying into our affairs in Naples."

"Is it only a rumor, then—not ascertained?"

"Only a rumor."

"Hm. Can we allow ourselves to be much troubled by rumors?"

Shrugging his shoulders, the Padre fixed his eyes in deep thought on the cowled statue of Saint Vincent which, with its blue and white robe, occupied a dark niche in the wall opposite.

After a pause, Rapi asked, "Have you any idea as to which one among the Carabinieri is doing this?"

"No. And that is what troubles me. Whoever it is has been clever enough to hide his tracks, for we

haven't been able to discover a single thing about him.

The professor laughed out loud. "Why then, it may all be nothing but rumor."

"So it may be."

Erricone entered. He of course, was on very intimate terms with his *compare* Don Ciro. He also must have had wind of the alarming reports, for as he passed the faint light of the window, the scar on his face showed dark red, and his features appeared screwed up in an expression of sharp and malignant study.

Again Don Ciro recounted his suspicions. Erricone nodded gloomily. Yes, he too had heard. Rapi, with an outburst of light-heartedness, insisted, "But what can they do to us?"

Both the priest and his godson lowered their heads. Then Erricone spoke gravely. "I have no doubt that things are wrong. Someone from Naples has sent a secret request to the police of New York to have our friends there placed under surveillance."

"*Dio*!" exclaimed Rapi. The priest crossed himself.

"Who sent this request?" asked Rapi.

"There's where the trouble is. We haven't been able to find out."

Rapi was openly startled.

"Damnation!" snarled the priest, and thrust a finger between his teeth to bite it in a gesture of blind wrath.

"Damnation indeed," muttered Erricone, turning toward his godfather.

Rapi reflected: "This means that Petrosino is going to be hounding our associates in New York."

"Petrosino—yes!" growled the priest. Erricone thrust his fingers in his hair and mused. "Joe" Petrosino's activities against the Italo-American malefactors had often irked these Camorrist chieftains. Almost single-handed he had fought a winning war against the spread of their influence in the United States.

Looking up, Erricone muttered: "I would like, some day, to measure myself against that man Petrosino!"

A pause; and then Rapi asked, "What are we to do?"

"Do? We are going to find this very clever Carabiniere and teach him a little lesson!"

"And suppose we can't discover him?"

Erricone slapped a hand on the other's shoulder, "My dear Professor, don't be afraid. We WILL discover him!"

A hellish grin twisted Don Ciro's features as he drew a deep breath, hiss-like, between the yellowish teeth. His face hovered like a mask of white silk in the gathering gloom. . . .

Just at that moment there was a stir behind the curtains. A young man in gray uniform passed across the opening. "It's Botta," whispered Don Ciro. This was the son of the palace porter, a full-

fledged Camorrist, who had been noiselessly sitting on watch in the antechamber while the chieftains conferred.

But there was someone else out there, and all at once the curtains were pushed aside, and, with an invasion of light, a large fat woman, the one whose crimson skirt had been flickering behind the curtain, entered, lamp in hand, ostensibly to touch its flame to the votive candles glimmering in the saint's niche.

Both Erricone and Rapi, their faces composed and courteous in the shaking brightness, greeted her, for she was Don Ciro's sister.

The conversation took a buoyant turn, though from time to time the priest frowned at his sister, in undisguised annoyance at her interruption.

The woman asked of Erricone, "And you, *Don Errico*, have you settled on a day for marrying *la Adelina Esposito*?"

Erricone shook his head. "I have had so many things on my mind."

"It would be good if they remained on your mind."

"How is that?" put in Rapi.

"*Mbè*. I don't have to say much. . . . I'm not the only one in Naples who thinks Erricone is making a mistake in marrying that *thing*." Vitozzi put up a protesting hand; his sister continued insistently, "No. It's no use telling me to stop, my brother; I think I have the right to talk; and I'm going to do so now that I have the chance."

"Yes?" Erricone's voice was soft, velvety, atten-

tive—the sort of tone that his friends knew as implying his most dangerous mood.

"Don't listen to her," said Don Ciro, "She's an old chatterbox."

"Is that so? Well, my dear brother, I'm not surprised that *you* sympathise with that kind of woman!"

Erricone cleared his throat. "But what is the matter with Adelina?"

"What isn't? You know that she's no angel."

"Naturally."

"And about the trip to Cairo—didn't you hear about the trip she wanted to make to Cairo?"

"That was before I knew her."

"Yes—and didn't she tell you what her purpose was?"

"To open a gambling place with Tottone o' Greco."

The fat woman laughed raucously. "Gambling place nothing! She was planning to go there to become the mistress of a Bouff!"

"A what?"

"A Bouff—that's a head of the Arab religion—something like our Pope! She can jabber Arabic; and she had a deed made out in that crazy language giving her hundreds of thousands! And this is what she intended to do: you know this head of the religion of Cairo is a millionaire many times. And she said to Tottone, 'You come with me; and I'll let you catch me and the Bouff; and I'll tell him in Arabic

that you are my husband, while you menace him with a revolver and force him to sign this settlement.' And when Tottone objected about fearing the police do you know what *la Esposito* said? Oh, she's a wise minx! She said, 'The Bouff is prohibited by his religion to have contact with Europeans, and he would be the first one to hush up the affair; otherwise he would be digging his own grave!' Now what do you think of that kind of a woman?"

"Very shrewd indeed, I should say," commented Rapi crossing his legs.

"But what do *you* think?" the woman insisted, addressing Erricone.

"Hm. Where did you get your information?"

"Where? From people that I can believe."

"I can't say that I share your credulity, Madame."

"But—" the woman was about to protest when Erricone interrupted, with evident impatience, "I know all about that projected trip to Cairo. And I don't depend upon scandal-mongers."

Don Ciro smiled slyly at his sister; here was one man she needn't try to boss; and she, gathering up her skirts, with unconcealed wrath, turned and abruptly left the room, bearing the lamp with her.

As Rapi and Erricone rose to take leave, the "Professor" asked, "What is to be our decision on this matter?"

"Of that unknown Caribiniere?"

"Yes." The light of the candles wavered on the

faces of the three . . . and on the serene-eyed Saint. . . .

In a low voice that threatened danger, Erricone said, "*I* will attend to him!"

The others nodded. What Erricone set out to do, he invariably accomplished! They passed into the antechamber. Statue-like, Botta stood at attention. Through the open window could be seen the pale highway sweeping over a shoulder of darkness toward the marbled cemetery, and nearer, a grove of poplars glimmering in the dusk . . . a fresh breeze was blowing . . . and all the leaves seemed to be running . . . running . . .

Gradually, over the ghost-like tombs, appeared a star. . . .

Two days later the three Carabinieri were again in conference in their secluded villa on the heights of Vemero. It was twilight, and the gold of the western sun was seeping through the laurels and olive trees. Important discoveries had been made. First of all, Farris had definitely ascertained, from Conte Lucchesi-Palli, that Cuocolo had been a member of Rapi's Unione del Mezzogiorno! This was very important, since the "Professor," when arrested, had denied any acquaintance with the murdered man.

Second: an incident told to Farris by a certain Marabini lent light on the murder, namely: fifteen days before the crime, at nine P. M. this Marabini

was dining in the bowery, flower-banked *cantina* of Giardinello. At a nearby table sat feasting four or five richly dressed gentlemen, among them Cuocolo and *'o Mandriere*, the "cattle driver." There was an altercation and Cuocolo repeatedly slapped the "cattle driver." Bystanders, including the proprietor, ran to pull them apart. A short while passed; and then Erricone appeared, gravely, as though apprized of what had happened. Sitting down at the table, he persuaded the two to settle their difference and shake hands.

They were about to go over more data, when the telephone bell rang. Fabbroni answered it. At once his face turned white. "*Per Dio*!" he exclaimed, "Is it possible?" The man at the other end of the line seemed to be talking in great excitement. . . . "*Ma come*?" . . . how long ago? . . . No one else's room? . . . No? . . . Are you sure? . . . Good Lord! . . . Very well! . . ."

Captain Fabbroni put down the receiver and gazed at his companions without uttering a word, dismay written over his features.

"What is it?" "What has happened?"

He shook his head. "Surprising news. Bad news. It may be that our hours are numbered."

"Numbered!"

The call had come from Fabbroni's trusted orderly in the Carabinieri barracks where he maintained his official residence as Captain. About an hour before, two men dressed in the uniform of Municipal Guards

had appeared there. Only one of them entered, while the other waited outside. The sentinel at the door thought nothing of it, for such men often came to consult the registers for data. In fact, the Guard remaining at the door had engaged him in a friendly conversation, inquiring about the number of officers in the barracks, their families and so forth. After awhile his companion came out, carrying a neat roll of papers under his arm, and the two strolled away. And just now, the orderly, going upstairs, had noticed the door to Fabbroni's room ajar. Entering, he found the little apartment ransacked: papers, files, books, linen, all strewn on the floor!

"What did they take?"

"I can't say yet. However, I have all my Camorra documents hidden in this house. So they can't have discovered anything."

"Anyone else's room opened?"

"No, only mine."

"Then," said Capezzutti, "They have found us out!" The three looked around the room, almost expecting enemies to spring, knife in hand, from hidden recesses. It was a tense moment. Slowly, through the windows they could see the cypresses and olive trees glooming; and on the pale city below appeared a sprinkling of lights. They inclined their heads, heavy with thought.

Then Fabbroni reflected, "There's something peculiar about that theft. It seems to be a warning more than anything else. Perhaps they merely sus-

pect something about me, and not being sure, have decided to scare me . . . but. . . ."

Farris interposed, "Why didn't they come up here?"

"That's just what I was going to say." Fabbroni raised his head and looked at his companions. "Perhaps they haven't hit upon this place yet. Otherwise, I am certain, we should have had a raid here.

"Then all is not lost," said Farris.

"Not yet. Though, if they are really on our tracks, we may expect discovery any moment."

"Then what are we going to do?"

The Captain turned and looked for a time at Capezzutti, fixedly, intently. Then he said, "*Maresciallo*, it is up to you, now, to save everything!"

CHAPTER 6

Capezzutti arose.

The Captain added, "This warning from our enemies should make us more eager than ever to beat them! And more careful still! Both I and Farris must lay low for awhile. And it is now for you, *Maresciallo* Capezzutti, exercising the ingenuity which I well know you possess, to go down into the city and continue our work!"

The *Maresciallo*, in an instinctive motion of obedience, carried a hand to his brow.

So far, Cappezzutti's efforts had been disappointing. He had at first, following rumors that outsiders had committed the murders, decided that his most fruitful ground of operation would be the suburbs and the provinces. He reasoned that if in the old days provincials had fought shy of the Camorra and were too independent to be shackled by its regulations, present-day provincial criminals, the descendants of old brigands, were quite as independent and would not be afraid to talk. So it had been as Commandant of the Capodichino District that he had begun his investigations, taking up his residence in an old villa that had once been a meeting place of the old Camorra and their rustic friends

whenever attempts were made to bring about an understanding between them. He varied his official duties by tramping through the country districts as far east as Bari in the disguise of an ex-convict. What he heard confirmed the belief that de Angelis and Amodeo had had nothing to do with the Cuocolo murders. On one occasion, the former said to him quite frankly, "I am an expert burglar and thief specialist. I live by my inventive genius in being able to take what I want. Why shouldn't I take what I want in this world? But I have never killed a man. I am a scientific workman, and when starting out on an affair I always bring a copy of the criminal code in my pocket so that I may know exactly what to expect if I am caught."

Amodeo was less eloquent. "We are of the country," he said, "And have nothing to do with that Camorra down there. You may believe me, the murder of the Cuocolos was an execution decreed by those aristocrats!"

Other conversations with criminals were to the same effect. One of them confided to Capezzutti, "That man de Angelis is lucky to be still alive, I swear. He should have run away when he was accused of the murders. That would have cleared everyone else. Instead, he remains and gets caught —and gives an iron-bound alibi. He's an independent cuss. I'll bet those Camorrists have him marked —and some day we'll hear news about *La Francesca* (de Angelis)."

And now Capezzutti agreed with his captain's suggestion. It was time for him to act, time for him to descend into the city. Instead of hesitating at this threat of discovery, he thought, the wisest move would be to lose himself in the Neapolitan slums, right within the stronghold of the Camorra!

"Captain," he said, "I am ready!"

Fabbroni and Farris arose. "Have you any scheme of action?"

"I had already been thinking over a course during these past few days. I'll go the way I am, dressed as the escaped bandit."

Indeed, this was the only possible disguise for him. Capezzutti bulked large, broad-shouldered, tall, jovial in color and outline, quite unlike the usual run of city Camorrists, who were lithe and almost effeminate in their natty elegance, depending entirely upon their acumen and wit. He was to play the *cafone coraggioso*, or "brave bumpkin," negligent in attire, slow witted, brutal when aroused, but lacking the keen malice of his city brethren.

"Certainly the best disguise you could use," commented Farris.

Capezzutti gazed into a wall mirror. What he saw there almost deceived himself, and brought the grin to his lips. It was a big, swarthy-faced country fellow, his square face bronzed by the sun of Sardinian mountains, with flowing, black mustaches and good-natured, but determined expression. He wore the costume of the *Genargentu*, even to the slouch

hat with blue band, red silk handkerchief round his throat, and crossed garters, and appeared a true descendant of those stocky islanders, the "Silver People," who had served so valiantly as mercenaries in the armies of Tyre and Persepolis!

Suddenly, Capezzutti uttered words in Sardinian dialect. An exclamation of surprise and admiration escaped Fabbroni, "The illusion, *Maresciallo*, is complete!"

Capezzutti spoke in dialect, "My dear Captain, there is no illusion. From now on, I am Gaetano Serra, the escaped bandit!"

And thus, this wily, pad-footed Roman hound was let loose right amidst the Camorrists—at the very moment when they were threatening retaliation—to slip in and out of their most dangerous dens, wily, tenacious, unrelenting—a man of whom it was said: "He might have been invented by Poe and trained by Conan Doyle!"

As Capezzutti left the dimmed house and trudged down the swerving road toward the city, alone, unobserved, songs escaped his lips; and they were Sardinian folk-melodies; for the man had transformed not only his appearance but his very personality!

Not the least trouble did he take to peer around for signs of lurking Camorrists. He, Gaetano Serra felt no fear of them! And it was almost lightheartedly that the big *cafone* descended into the white outreaches of the town. His mind was revolving a

plan of action. Where would a Sardinian fleeing from justice go?

Down near the waterfront, just a few paces from one of the principal arteries of the city, the new Rettifilo, which has been cut through the slums like a wound of light, loomed an enormous, mysterious building, known all over Naples as the "Palazzo Amendola." It purported to be a lodging house, and harbored the most dangerous ruffians in the slums. Probably two hundred men and women, flotsam on the sea of misery surrounding it, found shelter in the ancient palace: miserables who slept most of the nights in the streets, insensible and indifferent to passing noises, tired from prowling all day for food; thieves, slinking there after their dangerous exploits; murderers seeking that old building because of its many ways for disappearing in case of surprise; gutter birds and aged folks for whom the world had no longer use!

Each room contained four or five cots; and for three cents a night these miserables could sleep there. What unspeakable deeds of murder and vice had been perpetrated in that terrible building will never be known. One thing was certain, it was a stronghold of the *Mala Vita*; and whosoever entered there and did not belong, never reappeared into the light of day!

Walking along jauntily, Capezzutti decided that he, a Sardinian fleeing from justice, would of course go to lodge in the Palazzo Amendola!

He was now descending through the thickly populated quarters near the waterfront. In the teeming crowds he passed unnoticed. One or two *scugnizzi*—homeless gamins—the larvae of gutters, who might be seen at night lying on the sidewalks of narrow alleys in heaps of ten and twenty like an entanglement of snakes—did jest at the strapping country clod, as Neapolitans are prone to do.

Down the brilliantly lighted Rettifilo he lumbered, brushing elbows with men who, had they entertained the slightest inkling of his purpose, would have stabbed him then and there, right in the midst of the crowds! But such a large and conspicuous yokel was the last one on whom the Camorra, ever on the look-out for spies, would have fastened suspicion. Perhaps some lynx-eyed, nervous little fellow was stabbed, during those hectic days, on mere suspicion!

However, Capezzutti, believing in himself as Serra the bandit, felt sure that the whole world looked upon him as something of the kind . . . when . . . all at once, a loud, commanding voice behind his back exclaimed: "*Maresciallo*!"

CHAPTER 7

It took powerful nerve-control to resist an impulse to wheel about on the spot instead of walking ahead as though nothing had happened. Thoughts streaked across his mind. "Can someone have seen through my disguise?" At the same instant his back twitched as if at the sting of a dagger-thrust!

After proceeding for a few paces, Capezzutti stopped casually in front of a shop window and glanced to one side. What he saw there caused a thrill of relief to pass through his body.

A *Maresciallo* of the Carabinieri had just stepped out of a store and was shaking hands with a man who had greeted him!

"That was my baptism," thought the Sardinian.

Finally he paused at the corner of a narrow side street. Only a moment, and then he entered. Plunging into this slit of gloom, leaving behind the brilliant avenue, was like entering another world. Dark forms brushed up against him, and then passed noiselessly into the blackness. On both sides, the high houses towered like infernal crags, losing themselves in upper night.

Now, proceeding along, he came to a cross alley, an opening at the end of which glimmered the lights

of a tiny store—a wine shop evidently, for in front of it were piled barrels and heaps of rubbish indistinctly seen in the faint light that exuded from the dirty window. This alley ended in a steep flight of narrow stairs that disappeared into utter darkness. What was up there in the black folds of those silent houses?

Turning his shoulders to the alley, Capezzutti raised his eyes, and instinctively shuddered. There, right in front of him, loomed a vast, high structure, seeming to jut out into one-half of the whole expanse of moonless sky, tomb-like, black, oozing filth and terror from every stone—the Palazzo Amendola!

This was the place!

From two or three of the windows came the ruddy glimmer of oil lights. The rest was all darkness. A black archway led into its depths. Without hesitating, Capezzutti entered, and after a few paces through utter gloom, found himself in a wide courtyard. Penetrating here, he felt as though he had broken the last contact with his former life, that he must forget the city with its noise and music, its merry concourse. . . . Here everything was silent, still, dead. It might have been a ghostly glen in the midst of mountains where never a human eye had gazed! In the center gleamed a pool of water, black and glossy like those magic potions which the "maghi" in these very buildings prepared for their victims! To one side could be dimly made out a couple of two-wheeled cabriolets. To the other hand

were steps leading toward a broad, gaping entrance. Capezzutti mounted them.

A dozen paces amid blinding darkness, and he found his way barred by a wooden wall which had been built across the wide corridor. Under his groping fingers jutted a door-knob.

"It is begun!" he thought; and drawing a deep breath, he knocked.

At first there seemed to be no response, no sound save the echo which his knocking had stirred through the mysterious honeycombs of the building. Then there was a stir in back of the partition . . . sound of steps, alternately firm and dragging, as though one of the legs were unable to follow the motion of its mate. . . . A voice, a deep-chested man's voice boomed, "Who is it?"

Capezzutti asked, in his Sardinian dialect, "Have you a bed for to-night?"

The door was flung open. Far up at the end of the passage was reflected the lamp light from a side room. Against this faint glow, unrecognizable to Capezzutti, whose face was vaguely illumined, stood a squat, broad-shouldered figure.

The man asked, evidently approving this stranger's appearance, "Have you three cents?"

"Is that what you charge?"

"Three cents," intoned the man gravely.

Capezzutti handed him the money.

Up a flight of stairs and down a long corridor, the lame fellow led him, lantern in hand, to a door

which he pushed open, saying, "Here's a place." Capezzutti looked around. It was a high-ceilinged room, narrow, with a single window at one end. Along the wall were three cots, one of them occupied by a dark sprawling form.

About to go out, the man paused in the doorway, and asked, "Have you ever been here before?"

"No."

"Where are you from?"

"Sardinia."

Nodding, without another word, the lame man thumped his way down the hall, light ebbing along with him. . . . Capezzutti sat on the bed and leaned his forehead in his hand, thinking. From the next room came whispers, tense undecipherable . . . at intervals footsteps echoed along the hall . . . a woman's voice . . . the heavy boom of the lame man's words . . . then silence.

Silence induced sleep; and the Carabiniere, drawing off his boots, threw himself dressed as he was, on the bug-infested bed.

CHAPTER 8

It was still dark, early next morning, when Capezzutti was awakened by a stir in the rooms surrounding him. Footsteps came in chains of sound, faint and loud, from the various angles of the building. Its strange denizens who had quietly sought their repose after paying the *padrone* were now as quietly disappearing with the rising sun!

There was a yawn and a bray as the second occupant of the room stretched his limbs across the creaking cot.

Capezzutti murmured, "Good morning."

"Mornin'," mumbled the other; and then, raising his head, turned curious eyes on the disguised Carabiniere. He was a middle-aged fellow, scrawny, yellowish, with eyes like blue-berries, and graying mustache that attempted to fill the hollows under his cheek bones.

A few irrelevant words followed. One of the great laws of the *Mala Vita* is to show no curiosity whatsoever about your neighbor's affairs. This fellow, however, appeared to be naturally garrulous and not unwilling to engage in a friendly chat. Why not? The thick-set country man was all grins. And soon, while dawn paled the walls around them, the two were gossiping in very chummy fashion.

The man grumbled, "This damn place has become worse and worse ever since Maria, the Beauty, left it."

"The Beauty? Who was she?"

"Maria Stendardo—maybe you've heard of her—but no; you're of the country."

"Was she so very good-looking—that they called her 'the Beauty'?"

The man rolled his eyes. "Was she? Why, my dear fellow; I remember the time Maria first came here, just after she married that cuckold Gennaro. How lovely she was! God! How pretty! . . . not grown hard as yet; and when any poor fellow came, some cold night, to beg for a place because he didn't have the three cents, Maria would let him sleep free, even though it meant a lot of yells out of her husband. That miser—he's a second 'mother of Saint Peter'!"

"Where is she now?"

"She's gone. Poor thing! I remember how careful *Mari' 'a bella* used to be to change the bed clothes every first of the month! You know—" and the man's tone richened boastfully, "I've roomed in this house for years."

"And her husband?"

"That coo-coo still runs the place. He tumbled down the stairs last year and walks lame ever since. He has her mother still with him—maybe you saw the old hag?"

Capezzutti shook his head, and his room-mate con-

tinued with a story which held him spell-bound:

Once the Palazzo Amendola had resounded to the festival and pomp of aristocracy; but for over a century it had steadily declined. . . . "*Ah! Napulu, Napulu, nun è cchiu cumm era*!" Naples, Naples, it is not what it used to be! Some years before this decadent palace had been thrown open as a lodging house by Maria Stendardo and her husband. Maria was then eighteen years of age, with the manners of a lady, a slight, yielding figure—quite unknown among the lower classes of Naples—and the gentle, moon-blond features of a Sistine Madonna.

This exquisite bit of humanity was born on the water-front of Santa Lucia, her father being a sailor and her mother a cigarette maker. Having lost her father at sea when still very young, Maria became the jealous care of her mother, an honest, hard-laboring woman somewhat given to gloomy spells. Maria rarely went out, and then only to hurry, prayerbook wrapped in her neat little apron, to church. But something had been born with the angelic body—a golden sensuousness which eventually spread exulting through the girl's shy, transparent soul—Love! Love! Love was to be her fate!

Scarcely had Maria reached fifteen when her Madonna-like eyes began to linger with unconscious insistence on the dusky youths of the neighborhood. (A neighbor squawked to her mother, "Say donna Carmè, when your girl sees the boys she goes blind —*nun ce vere cchiu*!") One in particular had

caught her attention, a swarthy, bull-throated youngster, Gennaro Scorciarino; but as he was the son of a dock laborer, her mother did everything she could to break off the attachment. As well attempt to stem the tide! And finally an arrangement had to be reached; the marriage was celebrated; and the three, with the little hoard saved by the mother, rented the crumbling Palazzo Amendola and began to take in lodgers. Besides countrymen who stayed there after market days, there came returned emigrants gathered in by Maria's young husband, he enjoying a wide acquaintance among the boatmen who went out to the incoming steamers.

Thus, the Palazzo Amendola became prosperous: so prosperous, in fact, that neighbors began making complaints to the police. Gennaro, they said, was taking in some questionable lodgers. . . . The Questura sent agents to investigate. . . . A mere glance at Maria's mother was sufficient to convince anyone that the place was respectable; yet the remonstrations of jealous neighbors continued.

And so, in time, through these complaints, word of Maria's bewitching loveliness reached the ears of the local *Delegato*. He decided to visit the Palazzo in person. There he viewed the silent roomers, the melancholy mother, the surpassing "Beauty." . . .

Thereupon, with certain veiled threats, the police official intimated that he would shortly close up the lodging house. Maria's husband turned gloomy and reflected that if this were done they would all be

ruined. So he bade Maria array herself in her best, put on her amethyst pendants and blue silk scarf, and visit the *Delegato* in person to see if she might not prove more persuasive.

Maria did as she was bidden . . . and the future of the Palazzo Amandola was thus made secure! After a time the fair intriguante ceased helping her parent around the house. (This latter, like a mother-bird, appeared to have lost all concern for her matured offspring).

Maria had been like a lark springing up at dawn —with its shadow below crawling in a blue-white mist. And little by little, the lark vanished. But the shadow remained—crawling, crawling about hopelessly. . . . Nightly now she could be seen, in fashionably tailored clothes, dining with the *Delegato* at restaurants around the Galleria Umberto Primo. It was at one of these restaurants, the smart Caffe Fortunio, that something occurred to warp her life still further. Here Maria first met Nicola Morra, a well-known figure of the aristocratic *Mala Vita.* The two fell madly in love, although Morra had but a single eye, the left one having been gouged out by himself, it was said, in order to escape military service.

This Nicola Morra, known to his associates as *Puzzulaniello*, or "Red Sandy," was a man of some political influence. It did not prove surprising, therefore, that the *Delegato* was, one fine day, transferred to a post in a distant town, while Maria, quitting the Palazzo Amendola once and for all, went

to set up house with Morra in another part of the city.

And now, as the man informed Capezzutti, the old dwelling had lost what vestige of respectability it once possessed. He remembered that former state, too. He was an "old timer."

"And the mother still remains here . . . ?" murmured Capezzutti musingly.

"Yes, gloomy as ever. She hardly ever goes out of the building any more."

"And where do they live?"

"Who? *Mari' 'a bella?*"

"Yes."

The man scratched his head. "I'm not quite sure. It's some place on the Via Guantai, I think. But you could ask Don Gennaro."

Naturally Capezzutti did not go to Scorciarino to ask the whereabouts of his truant wife, even though the mention of her paramour's political influence, the fact that this Morra had been able to have a *Delegato* transferred to a distant post, had piqued his interest.

BOOK THREE

THE ROMAN HOUND

CHAPTER 1

Days passed. Capezzutti hung around the Porta Capuana in the daytime; ate macaroni in squalid cellar-taverns; dodged policemen in the "swell" Galleria Umberto Primo. . . . Occasionally he met fellow lodgers and stopped for a little chat. Word had gradually passed around that he was the bandit Serra escaped from Sardinia. . . . "A good fellow—something of a clod—but not bad at all. . . ." Twice he was arrested, haled up to the Questura, and obliged to give an account of himself. But his purse was full, and the papers he presented were signed by himself as Commandant of Carabinieri in Sardinia. When he afterwards showed these papers to his fellow-lodgers and told the story of his arrest, they all exclaimed, "What clever forgeries!"

Once or twice he enjoyed a friendly raillery of smut with the lame *padrone*. This latter, though short, was broad, strong as a bull, and extremely ugly. His eyes were of glittering black; the left lid had a droop, and over the right, the jet eyebrow made a circumflex accent. A network of lines and furrows kept twisting around the swarthy features whenever Capezzutti, good-humoredly, poked him with a thick finger and laughingly hailed Scorciarino

as "Prior of Saint Martino!" (Saint Martino being, according to Neapolitans, the supreme patron of all Cuckoldom!) . . . and from these unsavory talks the wily fellow learned several pertinent facts about Maria and Morra the one-eyed. . . .

In the evenings the big, lazy Sardinian loafed in the wine-cellars, frequently changing his table to overhear the talk around him, entering into conversation with strangers, in course of which he never failed to make a few Camorra signs or let fall a few Camorra phrases as guarantee of faith.

So far he hadn't struck a definite clew; but he persevered; and finally the truth hit him like a thunderbolt! All at once, Capezzutti was made aware of the Men of Silence!

It happened one night, in the Taverna delle Brecce, called in Neapolitan dialect *'o Miezoiourno*, a dim, quasi-oriental dive glimmering with its red oil lights at the end of a tortuous alley. (Out of such a place might Ali-Baba's forty thieves have conceivably emerged!) This was kept by a certain Pasquale, a famous Camorrist of the old school.

Capezzutti slouched heavily down the two broken steps and pushed open the door. The air was heavy with smoke. A crust of squalor lay thick over everything—over the blackened rafters, the sooty lamps, the tables with their tacked-on coverings of cracked oilcloth, the fat jovial form of Pasquale now wiping a hairy arm with his greasy apron. . . .

The "Sardinian" sat down. A few bright glances

were cast in his direction. "Hello. . . ." A fellow roomer sat there and had recognized him. Capezzutti grinned. His order was taken. Split sheep's heads roasted in an oven to the rear were served him, together with a portion of fried stock fish and large chunks of bread.

While eating, Capezzutti passed his eyes about. A dozen men or so were seated at the tables. Gradually he became conscious of a peculiar reserve among four of them which forcibly reminded him of a similar condition he had observed at the Caffe Massa and the Caffe del Molo. Instead of jesting and expressing noisy opinions with the rest, these four men cast quick, casual glances at one another and said no word. Capezzutti wondered. His imagination was piqued when, later on, he detected these silent guests exchanging furtive signs among themselves!

Pasquale lingered near Capezzutti's table. The Carabiniere offered him a glass of wine, and the proprietor, smiling, sat down to drink with him.

They chatted along. Capezzutti dropped hints that he was awaiting his chance to escape to America. The other, true Camorrist, did not show the least curiosity concerning his guest. Thus the conversation gradually led to a point where Capezzutti asked, "You have many strangers coming here?"

The proprietor thrust out his underlip. "Hm, no. Not many."

A few more words, and again Capezzutti asked,

"You have many steady customers, haven't you?"

Pasquale nodded.

"And I must say I know the reason," added the Carabiniere. "Yes, sir, since I've come to Naples the only place I've found good food has been right here."

"You bet!" boasted the *tavernaro*, highly flattered, "And once a man comes to *'o Miezoiourno* he becomes a customer for the rest of his life! Where in Naples can you get such fine sheep's heads, *capuzzelle*, or squids?"

"Do you mean to say that all these people are steady customers of yours?"

"They are . . ." and Pasquale swept the room with his eyes . . . "all old customers!"

"My! My! You have a very prosperous business!" Capezzutti had fixed his eyes on the dark blue flagstones at his feet where some spilled wine gleamed in the lamplight. He was thinking. These four taciturn men were all old patrons of the tavern, and therefore well known to one another! What was the reason for their peculiar reserve?

Two nights later he returned to *'o Miezoiourno*. There were others in the place now who talked freely enough. Just as he approached the tavern Capezzutti had noticed two well-dressed gentlemen, rather out of tone with their squalid surroundings, emerge from the door and turn up the street, walking a short distance apart. Since it was dark he had been unable to make out their features.

Hardly had Capezzutti been there a few minutes, when he heard one of the loud youths, considerably under the influence of wine, ask of a man at the next table, "It would seem that *Puzzulaniello* has no more use for *'o Mandriere*?"

The one addressed exchanged significant glances with his questioner and both shrugged their shoulders without further ado.

Behind these nicknames, "Red Sandy" and "The Cattle-Driver," Capezzutti recognized Nicola Morra, the Beauty's paramour, of whom he had heard so much at the Palazzo Amendola, and Gennaro de Marinis, whose extraordinary criminal record he had learned from Captain Fabbroni. They must have been the two men coming out of the tavern where, according to the young drunkard's remark, they had been both observing that same mysterious silence!

Capezzutti felt a jump in his blood: the chase was begun!

Returning to the Palazzo Amendola that night, he pondered long over the query: Why did these two men, like those others, who had visited the Taverna delle Brecce for years and were known to be close friends, not speak to one another? Then a great light shone in his mind, and the Carabiniere smiled in grim satisfaction.

Raising his eyes toward the window that gave upon the gloomy street, Capezzutti exclaimed, "*Omertà!*"

If the *Omertà*, or code of silence which so closely

sealed the lips of anyone who knew something about the Cuocolo murders could be so impenetrable, might not this *Omertà* be also practised by the actual murderers, who for a time had decided to ignore one another?

From now on, he realized, these Men of Silence were to be his quarry! He was on the right track!

CHAPTER 2

Early the next day Capezzutti risked a trip to the little villa on Vomero, and secured from Captain Fabbroni photographs of the worst criminals in Naples. With them pictured in his mind he had no difficulty that evening in recognizing at the tavern Antonio Cerato, better known as *Totonno Mezzapalla*, or "Tony the Half-bald"; Giuseppe Salvi, a little rat-eyed fellow alias *Peppe 'o Curto*, or "Peppe the Short"; and the aged Ferdinando de Matteo, called *Piscione*, or "The Dove," from his white locks and sleek, flowing mustaches.

These three were there, together with others whose names he had not yet ascertained. And they observed the *Omertà*, sitting apart from one another, and only communicating by stealthy signs.

The situation appeared so clear and so simple that Capezzutti almost laughed aloud. Could it be that these men were maintaining this pact of silence because they had been warned of a spy in their midst? And then his eyes dilated. Could it be that they knew all about him, and were only dallying before striking the fatal blow?

What matter? Capezzutti determined to shadow these Men of Silence, one by one.

A golden morning followed of clear skies and languorous breezes, with sunshine hovering over the city like a mist, the sort of weather that makes one agree perfectly when Neapolitans murmur: "Sweet nothing to do!"

Capezzutti emerged early from the Palazzo Amendola and stood right in front of the arched entrance to stretch his limbs and yawn. From the balconies hanging over the narrow street, mattresses on which thieves, murderers, and rogues of every description had rested their weary limbs for a few centessimi a night, were being pulled in, and bleaching linens—underwear, bedsheets, white, red, gray—strung out to dry. Dirty children ran around him. Capezzutti scratched his head. Now what was he to do? Again he yawned and grinned jovially at a fellow lodger who had overslept and was hurrying headlong from the *Palazzo*.

His first thought was "This street stinks." His second was, "I suppose I'll have to hunt up something about that one-eyed fellow Morra."

In the heart of old Naples, between the main thoroughfares of Via Toledo and Rettifilo, lies a section of narrow tortuous streets and ancient houses. It is a densely populated district, with constant going to and fro of people, making it easy for criminals to lose themselves in its midst. Into this labyrinth Capezzutti penetrated, ambling slowly, as though he had nothing on his mind. In reality he had never been so alert. Gradually he approached Via dei

Guantai Vecchi where, at number 16, he had been told that Maria "the Beauty" lived.

Finally, he came to a large dwelling entered through a shadowy courtyard. At one end of this space there was a break in the stone structure. An entire porous corner, seemingly washed away by the rains of centuries, presented a surface of crumbling brown spattered with sunshine. Out of this break there rose two steep flights of stairs leading to second floor apartments. Everything was filthy and depressing. Lines of dirty clothes hung dripping over the flagstones. Mattresses appearing like something viscid and organic were thrust out in thick folds from windows. It seemed to be entirely different from the lovely and gracious city surrounding it.

Capezzutti paused in front of this weird old building.

To one side stood something like a porter's lodge. An old, gray-haired man poked his head out and asked the stranger if he were looking for someone.

Capezzutti shook his head. No. He wasn't looking for anyone in particular. But . . . The house looked as if it might have some cheap rooms. Did the man take in lodgers? How much did he charge?

Out came the little old man. Quickly he scanned the strapping country fellow. Capezzutti evidently passed the test, for he nodded. "Yes. . . . I have. . . . That is, some people living here have a room. A fine room. It overlooks the *loggia* of the house in back. Do you want to see it?"

Capezzutti was not in such a hurry, and yawned. Then he said, "Well, I was thinking. . . . But wait." Here he paused and looked earnestly at the old man. "Someone told me that this house has a bad reputation."

"Who? By God! who can say that?" The other's faded eyes tried to appear defiant.

"Hm. . . . I don't remember for sure what the man's name was. But he said there were tenants in this house here who are dangerous people . . . and he advised me not to room here . . . that is, if this is the house he meant."

The man's face turned white. "I know who you mean. But they wouldn't harm you, my dear fellow. It's me, they're hurting!—me! For I am the proprietor of this house. Yes. Maybe I don't look it—but I own this whole building! Yes! . . ." and he began to grumble, "I know who you mean. . . . But they wouldn't harm you."

"Are they such bad people?"

"Yes—that one-eyed devil Morra, and his woman —*Chella troiazza*! I tell you; they've made lots of trouble for me since they came here. This is an honest house. I am an honest man. But what did they do? They not only fail to pay their rent; but they've given my house a bad reputation in the whole neighborhood."

"Couldn't you put them out?"

The old man cursed. "Put them out! Don't you know who he is?"

"No. What is he?"

The landlord bit his lip and looked meaningly at Capezzutti. Then he shrugged his shoulder. "Anyhow—the lease is in the woman's name. And just about a month ago—July sixth—I thought I'd do something. . . . And I went around to the *Questura* to see if I could seize their furniture. And do you know what happened?"

The detective shook his head.

"I found that it had been assigned to Nicola Morra and another fellow called Antonio Parlati! And the *Questura* people laughed at me when I told them about my troubles!"

Capezzutti had maintained his usual expression of good humor and friendliness; but his pulse quickened on hearing the name of Antonio Parlati! This was the spy who, together with Ascrittore, had denounced those "straw criminals" to the police and caused the freeing of the Mimi-a-Mare supper party!

Just then the landlord's grumbling broke in upon his thoughts: "They're a bad lot, especially that woman. You know they used to call her '*'a bella*,' but believe me—she is the devil in flesh and blood! They took the flat up there," poking with his forefinger at the apartment approached by the first steep ladder, "on the thirty-first of March last, and their friends, I tell you, are among the worst ruffians in Naples! And believe me, haven't they made rackets in that flat! I don't suppose you're a Neapolitan. But if you were you'd know just what

kind of visitors they have." Whereupon he reeled off a number of names which Capezzutti recognized as belonging to the Men of Silence who had been observing the *Omertà* at the Taverna delle Brecce and other restaurants!

Capezzutti seeing that the man had a grievance, and was ready to unburden his troubles to anyone who listened with a proper degree of sympathy, felt himself safe in asking point-blank (something he never had done of any stranger) "Do these people continue to come to the house?"

"It's funny; they don't come any more. But they did at the beginning, and for a couple of months afterwards. They used to bring their women along too. Lately however—oh, since early in June, the Stendardo woman has had very few visitors; and even that one-eyed creature Morra now hardly ever shows his face around here."

A fatuous smile overspread Capezzutti's features, and he enunciated as though he actually meant it: "They must have realized that they couldn't trifle with you, what?"

The old man straightened up, and his gray eyes flashed, belligerent and proud, "I can assure you, my good man, that they did!"

The Carabiniere slapped him on the back. "That's it. But, I repeat, if I were in your place I'd put them out."

Curling out his lips, the old proprietor mumbled, "That's what I ought to do—but—but—but——"

Just then came a grating sound as the door of the apartment in question was pushed open. Both men looked up.

Out upon the landing that overhung the court, leaning her delicate white hand on the railing, appeared a tall, fair woman. For a moment she drew her head back and glanced straight out at the glowing sky, though she must have noticed the two men hovering there under her sight. Then she descended.

As this woman approached him, step by step, Capezzutti scanned her curiously. She was pale-skinned, Grecian featured, with red, carnal mouth and full, well-rounded figure revealing its ample curves through a voluptuous, wine-blue gown. Around her shoulders was thrown a scarf of Persian multicolored silk, flowing down in front with its tasseled ends hovering over her feet. Her golden mass of hair, combed smoothly up from the forehead, presented a glossy, warm surface which seemed to absorb the very bloom out of the sunshine. Her eyelids were lowered, with their dark lashes covering all but the lower edge of an uncertain blue fire.

The landlord nudged Capezzutti as though to say, "That's she."

A supernal beauty she still was, though no longer slender and Madonna-like. Rather was this new Maria a sort of tropical vampire flower in whose glowing cup there trembled, not dew, but a ruby blood-drop!

Descending thus, like a stately, mysterious queen, an Astarte or Semiramis, *Mari' a bella* stepped upon the flagstones of the courtyard and raised her long eyelashes. For an azure moment her unquenched gaze met that of the country yokel. He turned away. The landlord grunted, but made no sign of having noticed his tenant. And the woman passed gracefully out toward the Via Guantai.

A Capuchin monk in clicking sandals came by telling his beads. Maria paused to let him pass.

After she had disappeared around a corner, the landlord turned to his companion and asked, "Well, my man, what do you think of her?"

"Quite an interesting woman. Very handsome."

"Handsome, yes. But then, the devil has made some women good-looking!"

Capezzutti nodded, though his thoughts were far from concurring with the old man's. He had noticed a touch of kindness in the woman's sensuous gaze. "Poor 'Beauty,'" he thought, "She probably doesn't realize what she does—or why. And this noisy old runt. He may be jealous—who knows?"

CHAPTER 3

While doing his detective work about Naples, Capezzutti was also obliged to keep up official appearances at Capodichino, for he suspected that a close tab was being kept, by invisible enemies upon the movements of all the Carabinieri around Naples. In order not to excite suspicion by his long absences, and to prepare for a day of swift action, he surrounded himself there with Carabinieri drawn from his own Sardinian corps: Giovanni Pinardi, Luigi Cataldo, Antonio Feola, Gaetano Ugga, Egisto Volpi, Francesco Petillo, and Giovanni Silvestri, men on whom he knew he could depend, and whose services he would require when the time should come for arrests to be made.

In Naples he worked at odd jobs, sometimes as a coal-heaver, sometimes as a coachman, and again, he wandered as a vagabond, wearily climbing the steep teeming alleys, stamping grounds of the Camorra, which run from the Via Toledo to the Corso Vittorio Emanuele. His one great care was never to mention the Cuocolo affair to any of the chance acquaintances he daily made.

He also tried to brush up an acquaintance with some of the Men of Silence, but there he was abso-

lutely unsuccessful. Besides their evident reticence to speak with unknown persons, these men were too dangerous for him to approach; and a false step might spoil everything. Capezzutti knew that suspicion was in the air, and naturally desisted.

But the average Neapolitan, when not fearful of betraying a secret or making revelations which may get him into trouble, is naturally communicative, gossipy, and boastful. And when Capezzutti in his wanderings found a barber, a coachman, or a shoemaker who seemed promising, sooner or later, he invited him to a caffe, where they were likely to meet two or three of the Men of Silence, and patiently awaited results.

Very often nothing happened. On other occasions his guest would carelessly recognize certain men who were observing the *Omertà* and tell him something about them.

And thus it was that Capezzutti accidentally stumbled upon his second great discovery: a Traitor —an epic Traitor worthy, for all time, of a place near him of Is-Kerioth!

He had decided to delve into the antecedents of Erricone's coachman, Gennaro Iacovitti, who had been one of the Mimi-a-Mare supper party. The man's testimony at the first inquest had convinced Capezzutti that he was only accidentally a member of the party, having driven his bosses out there knowing nothing of their purpose.

Thinking that he might pry some information out

of this man the Carabiniere determined to get a job in the stables of the Massimo brothers where Iacovitti had lately been engaged after the dismissal of another coachman, a youth named Gennaro Abbatemaggio.

On the second morning of his work there, Capezzutti, sleeves rolled up, was washing a horse, when a young man sauntered up toward the stable and remained leaning against the door, gazing at him.

Iacovitti looked up, and exclaimed, "*Uè-Gennarì*! haven't you found a job yet?"

The young man grinned. He was a small, but well-formed youth, with quick, beady black eyes and expressive features. There was something clever and astute about his eyes which instantly caught Capezzutti's attention.

Iacovitti said, "I suppose you're back at your old trade, eh?"

Shifting about in the sunshine that burned over the threshold, the youth kept grinning. Then he said, "*Cumpà*, your ears are larger than your brains."

And with a wink at Capezzutti, he strolled away.

"Who's that fellow?" asked the Carabiniere.

"That? Oh, that's Gennarino Abbatemaggio; he used to work here before you came."

Capezzutti nodded and went on with his scrubbing.

Three nights later Capezzutti and Iacovitti flush from a hard day's work, stepped into the Caffe del Molo to have a few rounds of wine. There the

Carabiniere witnessed a significant incident. As they entered, Iacovitti started visibly and looked very queerly at a large young man who sat alone at a table near the entrance. This was a strikingly handsome fellow whom Capezzutti recognized from photographs as Mariano di Gennaro, alias *Diciasette*, or "Seventeen," a former seaman, considered to be one of the bravest, as well as handsomest, rogues in the Neapolitan underworld.

The young man lowered his eyes, without a trace of recognition, and Iacovitti, turning his shoulders, led Capezzutti to a table at the other end of the restaurant. There they partook very freely of wine; and Capezzutti made sure that his companion was in a careless state of mind before they left.

When they staggered out into the street sometime later, Iacovitti bragged to him, "If I were so minded —though I am a man of honor—I could do the *sbirri* and police a good turn. Yes sir, I could! When I was questioned by them about driving Erricone and the rest out to the *trattoria* Mimi-a-Mare I said that while we were at supper a tall man came in and talked with Erricone and went away after he had a glass of wine."

"Is that so?" said Capezzutti, his eyes wide with feigned astonishment.

"Yes, I said that. You can believe me, for I am a man of honor. But I didn't say that he had his jacket on his arm and that there was blood on it."

"Blood! How strange!"

"Yes. It is true. And just now," boasted the coachman, "I've seen that very man in the Caffe del Molo!" Whereupon Iacovitti, amid a jumble of drunken exclamations, proceeded to describe the stranger in such a way that Capezzutti had no difficulty in recognizing the handsome Mariano di Gennaro!

Heartily, the Carabiniere said, "I am glad to see, my friend, that you are a man of honor!"

"Yes. That I am! Honor has always been for me the first thing!"

Another clew was similarly discovered by the Carabiniere. He had frequently hung around a *bottiglieria* or wine cellar situated in the old Campidoglio on the Via Nardones, just below number 95, the home of the Cuocolos. There he became acquainted with a couple of droll fellows: Gaetano Barbella and Giovanni Lombardi, typical Neapolitans of the lower class, who sometimes worked as barbers and sometimes as porters, coachmen, longshoremen and what not.

One night, a sharp-faced little man, whom Barbella called *Peppiniello 'o Curto*, and whom Capezzutti identified as "Peppe the Short," one of the Men of Silence frequenting the Taverna delle Brecce, entered the place and went quietly away after drinking a glass of *marsala*.

"Don't you remember the last time we saw that fellow?" said Barbella to Lombardi. The latter

nodded. (Capezzutti lolled half-drunk over the next table.)

"I sure do. It was right outside here at 23.30 o'clock (11.30 P. M.) on the night Cuocolo was murdered; and he was coming out of the *Palazzo* with a man who had a pointed beard and a handkerchief tied around his hand. And you said to me, 'There goes *Peppiniello 'o Curto* of the Customs House.' And I said, 'Which of the two is he?' And you answered, 'The shorter one with the black cap'."

"That's right," replied Barbella, "but we didn't know who the other fellow was."

"I know him now," said Lombardi, "for that was a false beard he had on. He's *Sannicola* who works for the Barber de Crescenzo. I asked a friend of mine how he hurt his hand, and he said it was with a hat-pin of his wife's. But you know that Guglielmina Liquori never wore a hat in her life. *Avrà visto 'o cchiupp' a furcella!*"

Barbella nodded and abruptly changed the subject.

A less canny man than Capezzutti, having overheard such a promising clew, might have asked questions, but he knew that if once they suspected him of wanting "to know more than he should," the word would be passed and he might feel a knife-blade plunged in his back some night.

Sannicola or "Saint Nicholas," was the nickname of a lanky, sallow-faced barber called Corrado Sortino.

The next morning Capezzutti sought out de Crescenzo's barber shop—a rather neat-looking place down near the waterfront—and was shaved by Sortino himself.

"Do you often cut yourself?" carelessly asked the detective.

"Never with the razor," was the reply; "but last June I ran a pair of scissors into my finger," and the yellow-throated barber showed his customer a scar on the middle finger of his right hand.

After further conversation, in which Sortino spoke of his influential friends, and how he had, in the past, shaved and trimmed beards of politicians and statesmen, Capezzutti went lumbering away.

As he thought of the scar on Sortino's hand and how it had been first ascribed to a hat-pin and then to a pair of scissors, the Carabiniere smiled grimly, remembering Cuocolo's blood-stained penknife, found in a lava crevice at Torre del Greco!

And now—the Traitor!

CHAPTER 4

So far Capezzutti had been very lucky in discovering several important threads in the mysterious web spun by the Camorra around the Cuocolo murder. First, the Men of Silence, including the barber with the scar, Peppe the short, and the handsome "Seventeen." Second, Maria, "the Beauty," and her paramour, Morra, the one-eyed, who were also connected, through Parlati the spy, to the plot engineered by the priest Vitozzi for the freeing of the Mimi-a-Mare supper party. . . . Third, the *Omertà* of de Marinis, the political district leader. On the other hand, he had been able to discover nothing, so far, concerning the bigger suspects: Erricone, Rapi and the priest Vitozzi!

A few days later Capezzutti was at work in the Massimo stable when the young discharged coachman, Abbatemaggio, again appeared in the doorway.

Iacovitti began to banter, "Are you working, ambitious?"

"Sure I am, as always," retorted the newcomer.

"Doing what?"

"The same."

Iacovitti slapped his thighs. "You rascal! You feel yourself too good for us now."

Abbatemaggio shrugged his shoulders and sauntered off.

No sooner had he disappeared around a sunny corner than Iacovitti turned to Capezzutti. "You know," he said, "this young lad Abbatemaggio seems able to get away with anything."

"How so?"

"I'd swear he has some hold over the great Erricone himself."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Capezzutti, though his blood raced.

"That's what I would have said too. But, how about this fact: when Erricone was in Sant 'Efremo, Abbatemaggio took the fine, silver-mounted harness belonging to the chief and sold it . . . and here's Gennarino, still alive! They say that when Erricone came out of jail and was told of the theft he simply bit his lip and pretended to treat it as a joke. But it was a very valuable harness. Worth lots of money. Now what do you think of that?"

"Hm. I don't know. They're probably friends."

"Friends nothing. Erricone acted as if he was afraid of his hired man. That's what many people are saying. And some of the street *scugnizzi* are now taking their caps off to young Abbatemaggio when he passes."

"How strange," murmured Capezzutti as they resumed their work.

The very next day Abbatemaggio appeared again at the door. For the Carabiniere it was a most eagerly awaited sight. He immediately dropped his wire brush and sauntered over toward the threshold.

Abbatemaggio jested with Iacovitti. Capezzutti, all grins, joined in the crude repartee.

"How do you like work here, big boy?" asked the youth.

"Fine!" and Capezzutti put on his most amiable smile.

"And how do you stand working alongside that idiot?"

"So-So."

Iacovitti grumbled. Abbatemaggio burst out into uproarious laughter. "Not so good—eh?"

At the risk of antagonizing the old coachman, Capezzutti grinned from ear to ear and shook his head.

When the young man left this time, he and Capezzutti were on friendly terms, mostly established at the expense of the irascible Iacovitti.

A few evenings later, the Carabiniere took Abbatemaggio to the Caffe del Molo where they were quite sure to find some of the Men of Silence. His intention was to see what reaction their presence would have on the youngster.

Abbatemaggio was very talkative, and also very cagy. He readily avoided several verbal traps set by the detective. Lowly-born, barely looking his twenty-three years, sometimes stable boy and coach-

man, oftener idler and thief, he had picked up a wonderful knowledge of Neapolitan life which he repeated in droll characterizations and anecdotes, his dark beady eyes flashing as he became in swift succession cynical, dramatic and funny.

He mentioned several persons in the room and whispered stories about them, mostly lewd; but not once did he refer to or notice the Men of Silence, several of whom were present.

Capezzutti was content to let him talk on, listening with flattering attention to the bright little fellow's flow of witty chatter, waiting patiently for something to break through. . . .

One of the anecdotes was really remarkable, namely that about Tobia Basile, the famous old Camorrist. This Tobia had been a big chief in former days when the Camorrist was really a "Man of heart," *Omm e core*, and "Bravo" who would have disdained the disgraceful pursuits of procurer and thief. He was a past master in the use of the dagger and had fought and won several famous *Zumpatas*.

Finally, in 1901, Tobia retired after a most valiant career—(his sinewy old body was a veritable hall of heraldry, tattooed all over with victorious symbols)—outwardly a quiet, ivory-faced elder, methodical, taciturn as an Indian, forever puffing at his pipe. For one peculiar thing, Tobia kept a diary. And anyone reading this diary would have thought the writer a lover of nature—a born pastoral poet! There were entries: "June 21, the acacias are in

flower. . . . April 5, What sunshine! What perfume of roses! . . . March 12, I have pruned my garden. . . . December 11, many sheep passed today. . . ."

Tobia had one major worry—though he never admitted it to a living soul: a talkative wife, somewhat younger than he, who was said to be in love with another man.

One day she left him. Tobia went on, in his methodical way, as though nothing had happened. And his friends, not wishing to hurt the venerable Camorrist, refrained from mentioning his wife's departure. "Shame on her," said the neighbors, "to leave such a good man—and at her age, too!"

However, despite his silence, a change must have taken place in the old chieftain's soul. He suddenly became very religious. Alongside his bed, he erected an altar for the three supreme patrons of the Camorra: Saint Vincent, Saint Anne, and the Madonna del Carmine. In front of these there were always burning candles and wreaths of flowers.

So lonely appeared the old man, that friends eventually prevailed upon him to sell all his furniture and go to live with them. This he did. A year passed in peace.

One day, while repairing Tobia's former home, some carpenters discovered a woman's body, perfectly preserved by lime, buried in the wall of the bed chamber, right behind the spot where the altar had been. It was his wife!

Quickly arrested, Tobia Basile, at first disclaimed all knowledge of the crime. His diary was brought in as evidence. On the day of his wife's disappearance, was the entry: "Water to the beans." This looked innocent enough. But there are men who can interpret the symbolic, secret language of the Camorra. All those entries about flowers and nature were nothing but records of crimes. And "Water to the beans" meant, "I have killed and buried her!"

Finally Tobia Basile confessed. He and his wife had had many arguments, increasing in violence with time. She had gone so far as to threaten to expose him and his friends. This made the old man brood. Of himself he didn't care. But the vow of loyalty demanded that he protect his friends. Thereupon he resolved to do away with her.

But as she had been his companion for years, and, in the main, despite the talk of neighbors, a faithful wife, Tobia determined to honor the woman by burying her body in the wall, as close as possible to the conjugal bed.

During the first night, however, something alarming happened. He awoke with a start out of his dreams, and peering to one side, saw the wall trembling at an angle over his bed. He jumped up, lit the oil lamp. Bright and shiny with its new plaster, the wall loomed solidly upright. Rubbing his eyes, the old man remained awake all night, sitting in his chair and smoking his pipe.

For the following night, he moved his bed away

from the wall and sought to sleep; but again it trembled over him, seeming to sag outward like a white precipice.

This was a problem. Carefully Tobia pondered it, and decided: he would build an altar on the place and keep candles burning there day and night. The power of the saints worked magically. For the first few weeks Tobia enjoyed uninterrupted sleep. One night he did awaken to see the wall trembling. But that was only because he had allowed one of the candles to gutter out.

Several months passed thus, in silence. The saints, with their golden halos, had sealed the corpse with a spell of peace. But something was happening underhandedly. Little by little, a little more violently each night, despite the glaring candles, and the flowers which he piled before the saints, the wall would tremble and keep the old man awake. More and more it trembled, more and more it bent over him; at times it appeared like a white avalanche that would some night come thundering down to gather his soul in its oblivion.

Tobia persisted in his faith for the saints. He would stare into their calm eyes and desperately ignore the white wall quivering around them.

Then came the time when every night the wall would hover over his face a few inches from his mouth. He could feel the lips of the corpse behind it pressing down toward his. He could stand it no

longer. The saints—they had abandoned him. Therefore Tobia determined to heed his friends' wishes and go to live with them. He went away. Strangers were let into the house. The discovery followed.

Capezzuti had listened to this story with unfeigned interest. "And what happened to Tobia?" he asked.

"Oh, he was sent to prison—and died there a short time ago. His school, though, still remains."

"His school?"

"Yes. . . . But that's something you don't know, *picciotto mio*." Grinning merrily, Abbatemaggio proceeded to talk of other matters.

Just then an elderly fellow entered, whom Capezzuti recognized as one of the Men of Silence. Abbatemaggio, seeing this newcomer from a corner of his eye, turned his shoulders until the man had passed their tables. This motion surprised Capezzuti.

He also noted the fact that Abbatemaggio carefully avoided looking at other men present who were observing the *Omertà*.

A few minutes later they rose to go away. And Capezzuti was startled to see Abbatemaggio exchange signs—lightning quick—with two of the silent men whom he had previously ignored!

At last!

Maresciallo Capezzuti sped toward the Plazzo Amendola in a high fever of exultation. His face

burned red. His thoughts were all aflame. "At last!" he kept repeating to himself, as he stumbled through the cobble-paved alleys, "At last I have found a key to it all—I am acquainted with one of the Men of Silence!"

CHAPTER 5

It was now the end of August, 1906. One evening, sometime later, the three Carabinieri held a council of war in their secluded villa. They had verified their hypothesis that the Neapolitan Camorra actually existed as a monstrous criminal organization, and that the murder of the Cuocolo couple had been the work of its hands. But this verification was merely a matter of logic—a conclusion drawn from appearances, hearsay and suspicions.

Suppose they were to arrest Erricone and Mariano di Gennaro and confront them by Iacovitti; or arrest the barber Sortino and Giuseppe Salvi and confront them by Barbella and Lombardi whom Capezzutti had overhead saying that they had seen the two leaving the Cuocolo Palazzo on the night of the murder; or cause Padre Vitozzi to be interrogated on his record as a suborner, together with his tools, Ascrittore and Parlati,—what would be the result?

Both witnesses and prisoners would clothe themselves in indignant silence, and the priest would swear that his mediation had been inspired by a sense of justice and in the utmost sincerity. No. The *Omertà* could not be so easily ruptured! Don

Vitozzi, supported by his allies in the Questura and the judiciary, would undoubtedly prove himself invulnerable. Why, it had come to their knowledge that Cicaglione, the examining magistrate of Naples, had brought his son to Padre Vitozzi begging that benign priest to enter the lad in some good theological college where he could hope for advancement!

Rat-ridden with Camorra corruption—this government of Naples!

For one fantastic moment Captain Fabbroni thought of asking the War Ministry to declare martial law in Naples so that wholesale arrests could be made. Perhaps then, honest citizens might be induced to appear as witnesses. And it might be also possible to entangle the malefactors and the municipal authorities in mutual recriminations.

But this, though spectacular, would hardly avail, Proof! Proof was what they needed! Proof that would stand in court! Proof that was ironbound and indisputable! And how were they to obtain the proper evidence in the teeth of such a malignant, omnipresent, ever-alert organization?

Lucky indeed that they had remained undetected so far!

Maresciallo Farris suggested: "Why not summon certain Men of Silence on old charges, and suddenly confront them by others? We might definitely determine the reason for their ignoring one another."

"Wait." Capezzutti had put up his hand. With the mention of the Men of Silence a thought which had been rolling within his mind sprang into definite shape. He said:

"A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Likewise a secret. Now, I believe that this lad, Abbatemaggio, can be made to speak. How? I do not yet know. But I am convinced that there is a way, and that I shall discover it."

Capezzutti paused. . . . Then quickly he outlined a plan. It was a bold scheme. If it failed, it meant certain death to him: for his companions, ridicule, which is sometimes worse than death! "As for myself," he added, "I am not afraid—come what may!"

The three had jumped to their feet, their faces shining in highlight against the table-lamp. Solemnity had swept through the room like the tolling of a monstrous iron bell. It seemed for a moment as if they had lost all powers of speech. Then, all at once, with a sob, eyes glittering, Captain Fabbroni embraced the Carabiniere and said:

"I know that you will do honor to yourself—to the corps to which you have the honor to belong; you will requite the faith which your superiors have in you; you will render to the city of Naples and to Italy, your country, a most noble service; and—you will bring the assassins to justice!"

Then Capezzutti drew away, and standing erect,

still in his disguise as bandit, saluted. He said simply:

"Captain, I shall do my duty—*Capitano, farò il mio dovere*!"

With which this pad-footed Roman hound went ambling back to the nether world of Naples.

CHAPTER 6

Via Chiaia leads out from the heart of the city to the Villa Nazionale and the broad white esplanade that skirts the bay. At number 175 there is a building rather out of touch with its respectable surroundings, middling, bourgeois, known in the immediate neighborhood as a rendezvous for unfortunate women and their masters. And here it was that the young coachman, Gennaro Abbatemaggio, lived at the time.

It was rather late in the afternoon of the following day—an early autumnal twilight, with the sky glowing mystically like the inside of a topaz—when Capezzutti approached the building. He had been spending most of the day in the Palazzo Amendola chatting with fellow lodgers and guzzling wine, and was now, in a most casual manner strolling toward Abbatemaggio's place and perhaps death!

He walked up two flights and knocked at a door. There was a rustle inside the room . . . a sound of barefootsteps. . . . "Who is it?"

The pseudo-Sardinian bandit announced himself. . . .

Slowly the door creaked open and the bright dark eyes of Abbatemaggio looked out. "Oh it's

you. . . ." The door was pulled back. . . . "Come in. . . . How are you? I haven't seen you for quite awhile. I had just been taking a nap."

The Carabiniere entered.

Black and keen, Gennaro's beady eyes questioned his visitor. A few irrelevant words . . . and then Capezzutti launched right into the matter which had brought him there.

Here was the trouble: His funds were getting low. Remittances from Sardinia were slow in coming. He could no longer spend his evenings at the restaurants. And besides, the Questura were beginning to annoy him; and so he would be glad to take part in a *furto* or theft, while waiting for funds from his friends on the island which would take him to America.

Abbatemaggio scratched his head. "Hm. That can be done, *Picciotto mio.*"

"When?"

"Any time. I can arrange it for you any time you wish—even to-night."

"Splendid! I tell you the truth—I really need money badly."

"Easy—easy—my lad. You won't get much in the beginning—but—we'll see what can be done."

As a result of this conversation, Capezzutti was introduced to a blunt, old, black-bearded Camorrist, Salvatore de Sarno. He was asked a few questions, passed all scrutiny. . . . Abbatemaggio put in some glowing recommendations in favor of his new

found friend . . . and besides, most of the Neapolitan Camorrists had heard of the Sardinian fugitive, Gaetano Serra, whose exploits in the past had often won their admiration. Therefore, without further ado, he was adjudged "dependable" and "jobs" were given him.

The first was an experiment. He had to steal a lap dog from an English lady and then return it and claim the reward. The reward was 100 lire; but this Capezzutti was obliged to surrender to his "boss" the Camorrist, receiving in return a few pennies.

"Good," growled di Sarno, in gruff approval, stroking his Assyrian beard, "You have managed this well. We'll be having bigger 'jobs' for you in a short time."

Capezzutti pretended to be grateful and pleased.

So a few days later, he was sent out to a horse auction. His task was to intimidate the would-be bidders, in favor of a dwindled, gentlemanly-looking fellow who was pointed out to him. This little man, clothed in the height of fashion, refined to his fingertips, evidently a person of breeding and rank, was almost shunned in fear by the obsequious Camorrists. Capezzutti wondered who he could be. The bidding started. Due to Capezzutti's thinly veiled threats, the horse was at once knocked down at a price much below its value to the stranger who paid for it and went away.

This "job" netted him two lire.

But the detective's curiosity had been kindled. "Who is that man?" he asked Abbatemaggio when they remained alone that evening. A flash, almost of fear, shot from the young man's eyes. "Well—it's best you don't know—best for yourself. . . ." and then he added, by way of explanation, "You know, *picciotto mio*, there is an *Alta* or "Higher" Camorra. But we of the lower—er—crowd—don't dare have anything to do directly with them."

Capezzutti feigned astonishment. "Is there really such a thing?"

Abbatemaggio smiled. "Well—perhaps there is—and perhaps there is not; but, *picciotto mio*, why worry about matters that don't concern you—huh?"

Capezzutti shrugged his shoulders. They let the matter drop.

After a few other "jobs" for which he received a mere pittance while the proceeds went off into the mysterious depths of the organization for which he was an obscure worker, Capezzutti began to grumble. One night he complained to Abbatemaggio, "But will this drudgery lead me anywhere—I, who, in Sardinia, had only to ask for food and money and they were given me in abundance? These friends of yours appear to doubt my ability and only give me beggars' work to do. I have killed men over there."

"You must have patience, *picciotto mio*. That is the way with all beginners."

"Patience!" exclaimed Capezzutti in disgust, "Patience! What good will that do me?"

Abbatemaggio tapped the giant's shoulder. "It's something we can't help. Take my own case. I wouldn't be much better off if it wasn't for my profession of coaching."

"But why must you do anything in connection with these bosses? Can't you go out and do a 'job' on your own hook?"

"Do what—?"

"A 'job'—*nu furto.*"

The young man burst into uproarious laughter. "Try it, *picciotto mio,* try it . . . just try it . . . Ha! ha! ha!"

Capezzutti muttered to himself, and bit the ends of his moustache.

Wagging his head good-naturedly, Abbatemaggio added, "You don't know much about Naples yet . . . but . . . if you stay here much longer, my lad, you'll find out. And you won't be anxious to go out and do 'jobs' by yourself."

After a moment's pause, the young man spoke in a low, serious tone, "I tell you the truth, friend, I almost envy you."

"Envy me? How?"

"Because you are going to America."

"Why? Would you like to come along?"

"*Mbè.* No. Not exactly. . . . But I've often been thinking of quitting this town."

"Aren't you satisfied here?"

Abbatemaggio shook his head. "No. And I've often thought: If I only had enough money, I'd marry my *Fidanzata* and buy a little farm in the country somewhere, far away from Naples. There is nothing but cruelty and poverty for a fellow like me in this city."

Capezzutti lowered his head for a while in attitude of deep thought. Abbatemaggio continued, murmuring sadly, "But it's impossible, I suppose. I don't see any way out of it."

Slowly the Carabiniere said: "Perhaps it's not such an impossible thing."

His companion laughed bitterly.

"I mean it," Capezzutti looked up. "You know that some day I shall have plenty from my friends over there—more than plenty. I am sure that I'll be able to let you have what you need."

With an impulsive motion they shook hands. Then, glancing around, almost as though he feared that the walls had ears, Abbatemaggio whispered, "Let me give you one advice, my friend. . . ." He hesitated. . . .

"What is it?"

"Do not tell anyone that you are expecting money. . . . Don't breathe it to a living soul . . . otherwise they will take it from you. . . ."

Capezzutti grunted. "Let us talk plainly. By 'they' you mean the Camorra—what?"

The other nodded.

The Carabiniere drummed his fingers on the table

and then said, "You know, I have always had a curiosity to join the Honorable Reformed Society. Couldn't you arrange it for me?"

Abbatemaggio's eyes brightened. "I have already spoken to di Sarno about you and he is considering it. For some time already you have been a *Giovane Onorato* (helper), and the men to whom you gave the cash you collected were the *Picciotti* (recruits). Di Sarno tells me that some of the big fellows have their eyes on you."

CHAPTER 7

CAPEZZUTTI started. "On me? Is it possible?"

"Sure. And I think you're in line for something better—that is, in case you decide to remain in Naples."

The Carabiniere laughed softly. "And after I have been *Giovane Onorato*—then what?"

"Why you are made *Picciotto di Sgarro*—That's the lowest rank of the Camorra itself."

"Is that so? Then money comes pouring in—eh?" The Sardinian smacked his lips.

"Hold your horses! Not yet. All a *Picciotto* gets is protection from the whole Camorra. Still that's worth a lot!"

"But who makes the big money?"

"The full-fledged Camorrist."

"And how long must I wait before I can become one?"

"The usual time is five to ten years. Distinguished service may cut this short. It's very rare, though, as in the case of Erricone. But—" and here Abbatemaggio looked queerly at his companion—"Is it a matter of money you want? Of course the big fellows have a hundred ways of getting it. Take Padre Vitozzi—he even sells the hair of dead women up at his graveyards. But there's another way for

you, once you get some cash from your friends; and that's usury. You can make big profits. There was Dana, who had been a cobbler. He got into the Camorra; became a *Picciotto*; and under their protection cleaned up 800,000 lire by usury!"

Capezzutti burst out laughing. "I think you're joking. This is just a lot of imagination—what you're handing me. People say the Camorra is dead."

The young man's eyes flashed. "Who told you so? Naples is full of Camorrists. It's much more secret than in the old days—that's all. Why, *Picciotto mio*, they collect toll from everybody—even from the police and the customs officials. Does that sound like an organization that doesn't exist?"

"Hm. No."

"The whole system of money-lending is in their hands. That's how they make their biggest money. It's poor people to whom they lend money and threaten when they can't pay,—poor people like servants and clerks. And these poor people when they can't pay sometimes tell them how their masters and employers may be robbed. Then they rob them, and after that the servant or clerk is in their power forever."

"But suppose one doesn't do their bidding, what happens?"

"Then they beat one, or fasten some crime upon one, or, if he's a member, they mark him with a *sfregio* like Erricone and de Marinis."

"Don't they ever kill?"

"Oh, no," replied Abbatemaggio, wincing slightly, "They never kill—that is, not for that."

"When do they?"

"They would kill me, *Picciotto mio*, if they knew what I am telling you. There are things we are never supposed to reveal—even to save our lives. They kill traitors and those of whom the Higher Camorra is jealous. There are three Camorras, just as there were in the old days: A *Higher* Camorra of which we know very little and to which all sorts of statesmen, aristocrats and merchants belong, a *Lower* Camorra, to which we belong, and an *Inside* Camorra, which is organized only in the prisons. But the *Lower* Camorra does all the work and is the most important of the three. Each of the fourteen districts of Naples has its two leaders of the *Bassa* Camorra. These are merely figureheads, for the real boss is the one secretly known as 'Selected Camorrist.' Now Fucci—maybe you have heard of Luigi Fucci—is the figurehead over the whole Lower Camorra. But Erricone is the real boss."

"How strange!" exclaimed Capezzutti.

"And talk about killing!" resumed Abbatemaggio warmly, "You'd be struck dumb if you knew half of what happens. Who was it poisoned Duke Monforte and his young English bride? Who kidnapped the Marquis Giuseppe Cito and held him for a ransom of 100,000 lire? Who killed the young American Bennet, friend of the President, on his honeymoon

and threw the corpse overboard while his ship was nearing Naples from Genoa? And how was the body of that other American, Ethel Reid, a cousin of the Princess Rospigliosi, found afloat in the Bay of Naples? And how about a bunch of others which have been called 'unsolved mysteries'? Do you think it was a dead organization that committed them? No, *Picciotto mio*, the Camorra is just as much alive and just as strong as it ever was—but only ten times more secret. You'd be surprised if you heard the names of some international big-guns who are said to be connected with the Higher Camorra."

"And who are they?"

Abbatemaggio smiled. "There are things I wouldn't tell anyone—not even you, *Picciotto mio*."

Ignoring this rebuff, Capezzutti wagged his head pleasantly and murmured in a voice of soft admiration, "But my, what a memory you have, my friend, to be able to recollect all these things!"

"I do have a strong memory, and I pride myself upon it." The young man's neck straightened up. His beady black eyes glowed with cunning fire. It was really true. Abbatemaggio's memory was absolutely prodigious. Without education, with nothing but his native wit and lucid mind, this same young Neapolitan was enabled, years later, in the Great Trial, to combat and baffle the keenest and shrewdest lawyers of Italy. Truly was it said of him, "I have never seen in a courtroom, on one side of the bar or the other, a more remarkable man."

The conversation wavered through other subjects and then lit again on the Camorra. It now concerned the election of members. Abbatemaggio was explaining, "When there is a new 'brother' to be elevated to the rank of Camorrist, all the twenty-eight leaders assemble at some out-of-town tavern and elect him. They try traitors in the same way and sentence them."

"Just as they did before Garibaldi drove out the Bourbons," suggested Capezzutti, "and have the traitor slain in a duel?"

"No," said Abbatemaggio, "only in a common *dichiaramento*, except in the case of the Cuocolos, that had to be different, for had *'a bella Sorrentina* lived she would have betrayed her husband's murderers."

"You are a great man!" exclaimed Capezzutti admiringly, "but are you sure of what you say—that the murder of the Cuocolos was a Camorra execution?"

"*Sicuro* (I am sure), *Picciotto mio*; for I, who speak to you, was selected to be one of the assassins; but that I could not be, for I have never shed blood, and I pleaded illness. Some day I will tell you more about it, *Picciotto mio*."

CHAPTER 8

With the approach of winter an apparent tranquillity settled down over the Neapolitan *Mala Vita*. The affair of the Cuocolos had been consigned to oblivion. The Men of Silence resumed their acquaintance with one another. The Camorra again made itself felt in all strata of society. Yet the eyes remained perpetually on watch over Naples.

Each watcher saw many things, and there were numerous meetings in the secluded villa on Vomero where these clues were compared, documents copied and returned to the archives of the police or the courts, prospective witnesses tabulated, and Camorrists marked in a swelling black-list. And, norm-like, the three began to weave a net which should one day be spread over the criminal world of Naples and heaved to the surface with steely, unrelenting arms!

But all was not so peaceful. Beneath this fancied tranquillity there kept running a quicksilvery nervousness increasing till it culminated in the heart of the chief Camorrist! Erricone found himself worrying at times about the future. Wouldn't it be better for him to leave Naples? What about America? That land of gold, did it not offer immeasurable opportunities for him and his followers to expand their

activities? Where Naples had yielded thousands, would not America bring forth millions?

One evening Erricone and Adelina went to a soirée at the home of a nobleman in the upper part of the city. During a lull, they drew out upon the *loggia* and sat there under the early, golden stars. It was the moment of night's great fulfillment. Darkness held, as if in a cupped hand, the tranquil city, the bay, the hills, the Vesuvius, far, far off, smudged with fires. . . . Serenity spread all around them. Everything grew still—peaceful—perfumed. . . .

Ruefully Erricone gazed into her gray eyes, quivering inwardly at the thought of what people whispered concerning Adelina. No; it was not true. She was a good woman—shrewd, of course, as one could easily surmise from her astute expression and delicately chiselled Jewish nose—but nevertheless good at heart . . . the sort of a girl for a man of his type, a girl that he could admire and love. Her level gaze challenged his.

For a long while they stared together, as though tacitly agreed to match their will. . . . But Adelina did not falter, and when Erricone's eyes fluttered for a moment toward the city, it was she who broke the silence. She murmured, "What is it—what causes you to look so strangely at me?"

He sighed. "Troubles. . . ."

"Troubles? Has anything new happened?"

"Hm. No. But much seems to impend."

"What—for instance?" she goaded.

Erricone shook his head and turned toward the distant bay. Three tardy fishing boats like black petals on the wrinkled water were approaching the point of Santa Lucia, each with a yellow light glimmering at the bow. Moodily he scanned the sea. He thought of the mute tribes beneath that winy surface . . . of the mute tribes within his own soul. . . .

From a garden below came the sweet echoing of a Neapolitan folk-song:

Fronn' 'e limone
A nnammurata mia ne vo cchiu 'e ciento
'E stu guagliooone. . . .

Hours seemed to pass. She still looked at him fixedly. Then he spoke:

"I am afraid, *Adelina mia*, that something is coming to hurt us—and to destroy all our plans."

"But—whence is this danger?"

Again he shook his head, in muddled disinclination to reply.

"But—I can't understand it. Why won't you tell me?"

"You wouldn't comprehend it if I did, my dear . . ." and he smiled gently.

"Now you are mocking me—what?"

Erricone rubbed his hands together. From the house behind came a stir. The dance was about to start up again. "Anyhow, I will say this to you: I may have to take a trip pretty soon."

"Where to?"

"Rather far—across the ocean. . . ." His eyes fluttered again toward the bay.

"What? Do you mean—to America?"

"Yes. To America."

The autumn stars that hung goldenly over Naples in the dark blue of a perfect sky, and the moon that gradually swung above the hills like an oriflamme, delicately outlined the form of Adelina as she buried her face in her hands. . . . And she had so bravely challenged his gaze! . . . Vesuvius rumbled. Over its pouring smoke the clouds were suddenly fretted with elusive red. . . .

Fronn 'e papagno,
Mo tieni 'e ccorne a cceppe, amico bello—
Che ffa ca po' te lagne?

Erricone stood up. "A man is a man," he thought.

And Capezzutti went plodding around as usual, mostly in the company of Camorrists. One day, together with Abbatemaggio he happened to drop into the famous "School of Tobia Basile." The Carabiniere had heard much of this "school for crime" said to have been initiated by the wily old Camorrist. What he now saw almost passed belief. Outwardly it purported to be a shop for bran and legumes.

The "pupils" were mainly homeless *Scugnizzi.* The natural adaptability of each was studied before

he was put through training: those endowed with swift and sturdy legs became purse snatchers; those whose fingers were agile and velvety became pickpockets; and those of undoubted bravery became burglars.

For training the pickpockets, they had a life-sized doll completely covered with tiny bells that tinkled at the slightest false touch. A mannikin also feigned to be asleep or fallen into drunken stupor; and the boy was taught to take away not only his purse, but even his vest and clothes, without exciting the least alarm.

In another room the "pupils" were taught the art of knifing—of dealing straight or treacherous blows —the art of slipping along the floor without making noise—the elaborate symbolic language of the Camorra, its diplomacy, its ways of diverting police attention, its latest and shrewdest methods of swindling.

The chief of the school—who appeared to be a shopkeeper of gravity and responsibility—anything in appearance but a ruffian—said to Capezzutti: "These are an ambitious set of boys. Of course they sometimes do dangerous stunts, like robbing a policeman. For a *scugnizzo* that's like touching the sky with a finger!"

Capezzutti expressed admiration.

"The best of 'em all was *Miezo Chilo* (Half-Kilo) and he was a phenomenon—the little rascal! Once he robbed a policeman who had fallen asleep, and

with the aid of a little razor, left him minus shoes, socks, jacket and pants—and the good man snored and smiled in his dreams . . . and *Miezo Chilo*, followed by his admirers, went off to sell the clothes and the 'donkey and harness' (watch and chain). Great boy, that!"

"Where is he now?"

"Hm. Dead, I think."

Capezzutti felt bewildered. Little by little he was being introduced to the workings of a most astonishing and complex organization. More and more he was realizing its deep-rooted strength.

Take the matter of the *Palomas*; the "Tongues of the Camorra." Once Abbatemaggio boasted, "Do you know, my friend, that we have messengers who can take word out of the deepest dungeon in any prison? These are the *Palomas*. Sure, and when Erricone and the others were in Sant'Efremo, they had communication with us on the outside all the time!"

"Through these same *Palomas*?"

"Why of course. It's a perfect system."

The *Pali* were another strange sect. These were the "Eyes of the Camorra," being especially trained to stand guard while a crime was being committed. No savage in the jungles or stalking beast of prey could have a keener scent for approaching danger. Abbatemaggio said, "You know—when Cuocolo was executed—I think I told you about him—there were no less than ten *Pali* on watch."

And innumerable other things were learned by the pseudo-Sardinian bandit. Once in a pretty and poetic tavern on the waterfront, while eating and chatting with another of his Camorrist acquaintances, Capezzutti witnessed a queer incident. At a nearby table sat a group of men, all of them elderly, save a single youth who bore himself proudly. All at once, in the midst of their feasting, they became silent. Then, rising, one by one, the elders approached the youngster and kissed him on both cheeks. This was the ritual of the kiss! The young man had distinguished himself in some deed of bloodshed . . . and that kiss was his superiors' acknowledgment of his bravery!

Capezzutti grinned. Some day he might find himself, too, subject to the ritual of the kiss!

But troubles were marching ahead, to surprise, to startle, to terrify the Camorrists! Was it second sight? Or a central core of brute instinct in these people so atavistically different from their fellow townsmen? Something in the air warned them that all was not right, that enemies were loose in their midst!

The undiscovered Carabiniere! What was this phantom Carabiniere upon whose traces they had been powerless to fasten? Erricone had tried his utmost and had been unable to identify him. Suddenly the Camorrist realized that he himself was confronted by a wall of mystery, of dark machinations

and secret foes, of tracks hidden in a masterly way! Panic overtook the supreme chief. He called together his underlings—all men high in the councils of the Camorra—and made an unexpected announcement. He was going to resign his supreme leadership! Why? He did not tell the true cause. He wondered whether some of those facing him were not really traitors. No. He was sick of the heavy responsibilities. He wished to step down, retaining for himself the command of the turbulent Vicaria district. He might soon take a trip to America where, undoubtedly, they would feast and banquet him as befitted a visiting political "boss."

But why was Erricone stepping down from the post he had held since 1893 with such a master hand? Out of tortured dreams his lips must have muttered the reason "—a mystery—an enigma—an unknown Carabiniere. . . ."

More terrifying still to their superstitious minds was the failure of the miracle of Saint Janarius.

Saint Janarius, the Patron of Naples, achieved martyrdom at Pozzuoli, on the southwest shore of the bay. The stone of decapitation is preserved in the basilica there, and blotches of sacred blood are shown congealed on it. In the Cathedral of Naples, moreover, is kept an ancient bottle containing some of the saint's blood.

Twice a year, on the first Saturday of May and on September 19, both the blood on the stone and that conserved in the bottle start to boil. The popu-

lace have a belief that if the miracle happens on time all will be well with the city. A prosperous year is augured. But if the miracle should be tardy, or fail altogether, then it portends pestilence, famine, and war!

September 19th found all Naples in a state of nervous eagerness. The Cathedral was decked with streamers of white silks and May-roses intertwined. It was a date of religious passion for the inhabitants of three provinces. Worshippers crowded the vast edifice and overflowed into the fronting square. A silver statue of the Saint was being paraded through the streets amid a continuous shower of roses. But more important was the question on everyone's lips: "Has it happened yet? Yes? No? Oh good Saint Janarius! grant us a year of peace and happiness!"

The Camorrists, ever superstitious, ever religious, irked by that vague sense of fear which hung over the city like an autumn mist, were worried. Not yet? Could it be possible? What lurked in the wind? As the hours passed, and no jubilant announcement of the miracle was passed out to the groaning crowd that jammed the streets, panic possessed them.

Erricone sent for an old woman, one of the reputed "Relatives of Saint Janarius." These are a sect of elderly people who claim descent from the saint's family. They are a queer lot. At the miracle they stand and yell fantastically, "*Gennari*! Hurry, hurry, you green-faced one! Hurry for we, your relatives are here to implore it of you. . . . O hurry,

you whose face has become yellow. . . . (They call him "green-faced one" and "yellow" because, when decapitated, his head, drained of all its blood, yellowish, was dangled aloft by the executioner.) Oh hurry. . . . How long must you make us suffer, O green-faced one? What have we done to make you so angry with us? Why won't you be a little kind to us? We are not strangers talking to you. We are your own kindred. . . . Hurry! Hurry! *fa mpresso*!"

Angrily Erricone learned that the decrepit hag, one of the outstanding "Relatives" of Saint Janarius, was not at the Cathedral, but had fallen asleep at home, in a sort of swoon, a sort of dreaming fear. . . .

"Why isn't she at the altar? Confound her! Tell her to go there immediately! Tell her that I command it!" and then he turned around. . . . "No miracle yet?" Fear bedevilled him, fear that coiled in his mind more tangible and real than in the stolid soul-mass of his ignorant followers.

Off, through melting crowds, the woman was sifted, in a growing whirl, to join the others. "A Relative! A Relative!" A path opened before her, clean across the throng to the sanctuary. Her ululations were soon heard outpealing the rest. But no. The Saint proved obdurate. . . . Minutes dragged by. . . . The choir sang plaintively. . . . The worshippers moaned and murmured orisons in the brilliantly illumined church. . . . But no miracle. . . . No miracle. . . . No miracle!

Then horror gripped the heart of Naples. "Something terrible is sure to happen within the next twelve months!" The word was passed out. Something terrible is sure to happen! The miracle has failed! People groaned. . . . Homes were darkened. . . . The miracle has failed! . . . A hush of dread possessed the city. Erricone held his face in his hands and mused keenly, the scar red as a devil's finger laid across his cheek. Rapi, who tried to laugh it off, found himself gazing back, startled-eyed, at a fear that hounded him like a shadow. And in his dim room, Don Ciro Vitozzi, the graveyard priest, sat scowling and muttering curses!

CHAPTER 9

SOMETHING terrible is sure to happen! Capezzutti was astonished to notice the tidal wave of terror which swept over his Camorra associates. As the days streamed by, this nervousness grew more and more apparent. Now he was informed that Maria "the Beauty" intended to move from the Via Guantai address. Perhaps that shadow of fear had gradually drawn across the placid cirque of her own sunny days.

But Don Tedesco, the querulous (and gray-erotic) landlord, had something to say on that score. "What? Does she intend to decamp—and I fooled out of so many months' rent? *Pu San Gennaro*! Not if *I* can call myself Giuseppe Tedesco!" Hot jealousy and wrath imbued him with courage to act. "Hell knows no fury—" may well apply to males, especially when gray-erotic. Bravely, Don Tedesco marched down to the Municipio and caused a lien to be placed on Maria's household effects!

As a result, the patrolman on the beat, a certain Lombardi, was handed strict orders to thwart any attempt at removing the Stendardo furniture. Two days passed. The "Beauty" swept majestically past the landlord's cubby-hole, supremely unconcerned at

the invectives which his wrinkled head, poked through the square door-window, snapped in her direction. It might have been a little cranky poodle barking out at her for all the notice she tendered him.

Then, one fine morning, the neighbors were treated to a little comedy. Making his early rounds, Lombardi turned around the Via Guantai corner and noticed two porters stopping a pushcart under Maria's window. He rushed up. "What are you doing here?"

"*Signor' 'o 'cellenza.* . . . Your Excellency, we only come to move the furniture of the lady. . . ."

"Whose—of *la Stendardo*?"

"Yes, Excellency . . . *d'a bella.* . . ."

"What the devil! Wait a minute. . . ."

At that juncture five hard-looking individuals stalked upon the scene. Among them, and evidently a leader of his chunky companions, was tiny *Peppe 'o Curto.*

"What's the trouble around here?" asked this testy little spokesman, pushing his cap aslant.

The policeman explained. They had no right to take away the furniture. He was merely obeying orders. Sorry—but it couldn't be helped.

"Wait; how about these?" and Peppe stripped some yellowish receipts from his vest pocket. "They ought to satisfy you." The papers purported to show that Tedesco had been payed rental up to date and that the Stendardo woman was accordingly at liberty to remove her belongings. "They ought to

be enough . . ." insisted Peppe, his small rat-eyes flashing dangerously.

The guard remained unconvinced. "I think there's something wrong. Sorry to offend you people, but I'll have to make sure. Have to see my chief." He nodded in direction of the police station. Peppe snarled. Two or three of the others muttered threats. Why the devil had orders gone around to refrain from violence? Lombardi added, "And don't touch anything until I get back."

Quickly he reported to the district police station of San Giuseppe. Within a few minutes he returned accompanied by Brigadiere Ceulachi, Sotto-Brigadiere Oliva, and two other policemen.

A miniature riot greeted them. Old Tedesco had emerged from his lair and was shaking his fist in a most theatrical manner up at the Stendardo woman's door. "You harlot of the gutters, you who have brought dishonor to my building—yes—it's my property and not yours. . . . You filthy Jezebel . . . and you go around putting on airs like a queen. Who do you think you are, anyhow? Do you imagine that I, Giuseppe Tedesco, will let you take away your filthy rags and sticks without paying me? . . . *tutta chesta scartapella*! What do you think I am? . . . Ah! Here come the police! At least there still is some justice in this city! Here, gentlemen! Here! this way! . . . That's the woman up there! Up there—that's where she lives! She's

hiding her face and she ought to! The Jezebel! (He repeated "Jezebel" with a sweet smacking of tongue, as though elated at his Biblical knowledge.) Now she'll get what she deserves! This way, gentlemen."

Flapping his arms like a black rooster's wings, stretching himself on tiptoes, chin protruding in air, the wizened old landlord glared in an ecstasy of wrath toward Maria's shut door. Strict inquiry was made by the Brigadiere. What did this mean? A table and several chairs were already piled on the pushcart. On whose authority had the porters proceeded to take out furniture? His remarks were punctuated by shrill exclamations from the landlord: "She is filth! Filth! Come down here you gutter-bird, you Jezebel, and I'll tell you what I think of you. Oh these criminals!" Sullenly Peppe and his four henchmen stood to one side and glared at Tedesco. (Now, what wouldn't they have given to have had him alone in a nice quiet alley?)

After a few minutes' wrangling, the whole party, including the accusive pushcart, were led off to the police station: Peppe "the Short," his four henchmen, scrumpy Tedesco, and the silent "Beauty."

Brigadiere Oliva said to Lombardi, "You watch this place and see that they don't attempt to take away anything else!"

"Oh, but they'll try it—these criminals—these gutter-snakes!" yelled Tedesco. Someone from a

nearby window splashed him with a certain malodorus substance. . . . "Uuuugh! These criminals!"

Early the next morning, Lombardi, going his rounds, again paused in front of Maria's door. All was quiet. From the landlord's room alone a mingled grumbling and moaning escaped at intervals. While the policeman stood surveying the house and reflecting that he might have to remain in the immediate neighborhood for the rest of the day, he felt a tap on his shoulder. Turning, Lombardi recognized Sotto-Brigadiere Oliva.

"Good-morning," said the officer. "I just came to tell you that you needn't bother about the furniture of this Stendardo woman any more."

"How is that? Did her dear old man withdraw the lien?"

Oliva shrugged his shoulders. "Can't say. It's orders from headquarters. Don't bother about them." Saying which, he wheeled around on his heels and hurried back toward the station.

For a long while Lombardi stood there dumbfounded. It was not the first time that he had been suddenly ordered to "stop bothering" about people on whom his attention had previously been directed. But something about this case struck him as rich. The squawking old landlord—why he seemed to be the last man in the world to do that woman a favor! God! How he had cursed her!

Perhaps the half-smirk on the policeman's lips would have stretched to humorous proportions had he been able to see Don Tedesco at that moment: groaning, snarling, in the dim cubby-hole, hitting his head against the smudgy wall in futile wrath, a single thought revolving like a carrousel of green and golden lust: "with others she would go and not with me . . . with others she would go and not with me. . . ."

And just as the policeman snapped his fingers and walked away from the house, the door to Maria's apartment flew open. Out stepped the "Beauty."

The full morning sunshine swooped her up in flame. Her face shone, peaked with golden hair. Her feet glimmered daintily under the brown-tasseled fringes of ornate scarf. An aura hovered around her winy-blue contour . . . a glow of rising flames. . . .

Deep into the heart of the morning was set Maria's azure gaze. Those eyes with their touch of the child so easily pleased, seemed to be greeting the city, the sun, the widening halo of day; she appeared calmed, as though the feelings, the sensings of surrounding existence, were alighting upon her, delicately, one by one, like snowflakes . . . her lips seemed about to murmur "Good morning, good morning," to everything . . . when, all at once, a change flew over her features; and in a wild startled moment, Maria's eyes remained fixed searchingly out, out, out; and her lips pouted slightly, scared, frightened. . . .

Under her sight far down at the turning of the street, a figure had passed. It was a ghost—It was surely a ghost! She had noticed it before. She had spoken of it to Morra: "I'm afraid to stay here any longer. I'm afraid. It has been passing so many times." . . . The figure was that of a sombre, dark-robed woman, trudging along, head bowed, eyes inclined toward the pavement—yet with her thoughts, her feelings, her soul, staring full-faced at Maria's door. . . . The figure was that of one who, Maria knew, rarely left the Palazzo Amendola—the eyes, rueful, accusive, dreading, were those of one who had guarded so jealously over a daughter's tender girlhood. . . .

. . . . It was a ghost. . . .

Meanwhile, little by little, Capezzutti was prying information from his friend Gennaro Abbatemaggio. He had decided to concentrate all efforts on this one "Man of Silence." The revelations which the self-acknowledged Camorrist and selected murderer of the Cuocolos gradually made were not a matter of casual meetings at cafes, of visits to prison where Abbatemaggio was for a time confined, or of lengthy chats when Capezzutti, by agreeing with everything he said, actually dominated the man. They were not a matter of days or weeks, but of months during which the young coachman became as clay in the hands of the potter, the giant Sardinian. For weary months it did not entirely respond to his touch. As

he moulded the clay, he felt that there was always something beneath the surface which he could not bring into view. At times Abbatemaggio balked. He would glance with suspicion on his too-intrusive friend. Once or twice he refused point-blank to answer questions.

But Capezzutti was patience personified. The day would come when he would declare himself—the master that he was—and then the clay would yield up all its secrets!

BOOK FOUR

SON OF IS-KERIOTH

CHAPTER 1

One day, toward Christmas, 1906, Capezzutti came to the house on Via Chiaia in high spirits. "Good news!" he exclaimed to Abbatemaggio, holding forth a bulky envelope, "I have finally received moneys from my people in Sardinia, and now, my friend, we may be able to attain each of us his dream!"

"Do you mean . . ." Abbatemaggio's voice was hesitant—"that you will help me out?"

"Why not? Did I not promise it?"

All at once the young man's eyes grew wide. Before he had realized it, words escaped him: "I wonder——"

"Eh? Now; you're always wondering."

"I wonder what will come out of all this. . . ."

Half jocularly, Capezzutti slapped him on the shoulder saying, "Go on, *Abbatemà*—what are you worrying about? Do you not trust me?"

The beady black eyes of the young coachman flashed cunningly. He was half aware, by now, that this kind friend of his, this "escaped bandit," so merry and rubicund, held something in mind as yet undivulged. What was it? The wily fellow had an inkling of the truth; and yet, somehow fascinated,

blinded by the persuasive guile of the Sardinian giant, he allowed himself to be lured on. Somehow, when in Capezzutti's presence, he experienced no fear for the Camorra.

And thus it was that Abbatemaggio left the *mala vita* of Naples and with the money furnished him by Capezzutti, purchased a small farm near Caserta, the Versailles of Naples. After so much worry, so much peril, he was emerging from the dark surroundings of his youth, as out of an Amazon jungle, into the full sunshine of honest existence!

In the early days of 1907, he married his *fidanzata*, Antonetta Zaccaria. They arranged to have a little wedding party. Capezzutti promised to come, saying, "Perhaps I may bring some Sardinian friends who have just arrived in Naples on their way to America. You don't mind, do you?"

"Mind? Why, *carissimo*, any friend of yours is perfectly welcome—welcome!"

Capezzutti came.

But it was in his full gold-braided uniform as *Maresciallo* that he appeared, tall and imposing, on the threshold, shoulders thrust against the brilliant stars of an Italian night; and his "Sardinian friends" were the faithful Giovanni Pinardi, Luigi Cataldo, Antonio Feola, Gaetano Ugga, and Egisto Volpi, of the Carabinieri, also in glittering uniform!

"It was you!" exclaimed Abbatemaggio time and again throughout the evening whenever he and Ca-

pezzutti remained for a moment alone, "It was you, you whom I brought to De Sarno, whom I introduced to my friends, whom I believed to be Gaetano Serra. . . . It was you!"

Capezzutti looked bluntly at him, square-shouldered, self-possessed, as though to say, "Yes—and what of it? What can you do about it? Can you undo what has been done?"

"It was you!" Abbatemaggio kept repeating, in a sort of fascinated fear. And instinctively he shrank back. He saw the menaces surrounding him, the spectres, the black arms of vengeance looming above the horizon of his troubled existence! Days lay in ambush at his door—days of terror!

"It was you!" And now what would come out of it? The young man began to feel himself driven on by an irresistible force, he felt that his fate was in other hands, that his future was to be resolved according to the plans of others . . . and . . . and he literally threw up his arms and surrendered. . . .

From now on he was going to make a clean breast of everything. It was useless to struggle against fate. He had been too nicely entangled. It was no use.

With an impulsive rendering, Abbatemaggio completed his confession in a manner to win the full credence and esteem of Capezzutti. Day after day he spent hours with the Carabiniere, telling in full the story of the Cuocolo murder, detailing damning facts about the Neapolitan criminal life, describing

hundreds of crimes. Again and again he would balk in fear, realizing the precipice along whose slippery edge he was stepping. But always the big bluff musketeer would tether him around.

Many of the details related to Capezzutti had already been surmised or known; others were to be confirmed by further investigation. Still the confession fitted exactly with the original hypothesis constructed by Captain Fabbroni, and now that hypothesis might be rewritten with names, dates, places, and personalities.

CHAPTER 2

Abbatemaggio declared that Gennaro Cuocolo had been slain in the Cupa Calastro by Nicola Morra, alias "'o Puzzulaniello" ("Red Sandy," the paramour of Maria Stendardo); Corrado Sortino, alias "Sannicola" ("Saint Nicholas"); Mariano di Gennaro, alias "'o Diciasette" ("Seventeen"); and Antonio Cerrato, alias "Totonno Mezzapalla" ("The Half-bald"); and that Cuocolo's wife had been dealt with by the daggers of Sortino and Giuseppe Salvi, alias "Peppe 'o Curto" ("Peppe the Short"). The crime, he said, had been planned by Ferdinando de Matteo, alias "'o Piscione" ("The Dove"), and Gennaro de Marinis, alias "'o Mandriere" ("The Cattle-Driver"), supervised by Enrico Alfano, alias "Erricone," the real head of the Camorra, Luigi Fucci, alias "'o Gassusaro" ("The Soda Water Vendor"), the figurehead of the society, and Gennaro Ibello, head of the suburban Camorra.

Of Erricone's brother, Ciro, Abbatemaggio had little to say, nor did he have anything to say concerning Giovanni Rapi, alias "'o Prufessore," until after Capezzutti had revealed himself to him at the Caserta wedding. He may have still entertained a certain fear and awe for the "Professor" whose hands

reached out into the mysterious regions of the Upper Camorra. But finally he described this supernal gambler, this gifted linguist, this man of the world with the fatal gift of familiarity, as the greatest criminal of them all, as the man whose interests the others served, the Treasurer of the entire Camorra!

Gennaro Cuocolo had been an insurgent in the society. He was a man of indomitable courage, strong, wilful, quick to grow angry and to avenge an insult. He hailed from the upper circles of Naples; and he showed this origin by his aristocratic and gentlemanly bearing, and also by a sort of carelessness in the face of danger. Somehow, the glamor of evil had caught him—(For sin has its grand and glamorous heights as well as virtue)—had dazzled and swept over him. From early youth Gennaro had been infatuated by the tales of daring and strength related about the older Camorrists. He had frequented their haunts; he had been entangled by their women. A passionate man, full of life, full of fire and temper, and that indescribable surplus something which makes both criminal and genius, he had instantly won the respect of his evil associates. And this respect had pleased him!

As Cuocolo's uncle, a rich tanner, said, on recognizing Gennaro's mutilated body: "He was bound to finish like this! Ever since his boyhood he had given himself up to light loves and bad companions. He brought dishonor to his family. His father died of a broken heart. He soon dissipated his large fortune

and almost ruined his younger brother. He was interdicted and given three hundred francs a month which should have enabled him to live decently. But he continued to follow his evil ways, even to the point of marrying that terrible woman, Maria Cutinelli!"

Step after step taken across a most romantic and highly adventurous career, had eventually led Maria Cutinelli, the tawny-haired Sorrentina, into a fashionable tea-house on Via Roma, where she remained, bound by the scarlet chains of harlotry! One day Gennaro Cuocolo, tall, vigorous, passionate, stepped into her ken. Instantly she sensed freedom. Still lovely, still *'a bella Sorrentina*, Maria spun her web, foreseeing with uncanny precision the fact that this man's passion was the one chance which life would ever offer her of breaking the shackles which held her down.

Cuocolo determined to have her. And he brushed away all impediments, as he always did whenever he strongly desired anything. Within a short while, despite the pleadings of his relatives and the warnings of his friends, he married the woman. By this time Gennaro was already high up in the Camorra and enjoyed a substantial income. As he wrote in a letter, shortly before his death:

"Even if I have married a beautiful woman of not illiberal habits, I am content. She is a faithful wife, and, moreover, my marriage was the result of a vow. At thirty I was ill of a terrible disease, and vowed to Saint Janarius, my Patron, that if I recovered, I

would rescue some unfortunate female from sin and make her my wife. Saint Janarius heard my prayer, and I have maintained my word. There is real love between us two. And since my marriage I have been tranquil and home-loving. Only once have I risked compromising myself—and that was a short while ago when, in public, in the Galleria Umberto Primo, I boxed the ears of Enrico Alfano!"

This final statement was true. Cuocolo had boxed the supreme chief's ears as a reminder that, powerful though Erricone might be, it was not safe to oppose the plans of a man of courage. And, strange to say, Erricone—who was anything but a coward—had let the matter drift, for the nonce. As for Cuocolo—he didn't care: he was afraid of no one! He stalked around in a sort of defiant anger. Something had turned within him—some revulsion of his former feelings toward the "Honorable Brethren."

What had caused this change?

What had brought on the rift between this handsome, daring rogue, this ideal Camorrist, and his submissive fellows?

It will never be known. Perhaps it was because Cuocolo realized, all at once, the depths into which he had fallen. Perhaps it was because of a break in the spell which the lovely Sorrentina had thrown over him. Despite his ostensible faith in her—as evidenced by the letter, Cuocolo had become extremely jealous and suspicious of Maria. He had caught her flirting with a bosom friend of his—a certain Naz-

zareno de Martiri. As a result he had betrayed this latter to the police and had had him sent to prison. This act of his, this betrayal of a brother Camorrist, was a sort of Rubicon. Once crossed, nothing else mattered: hatreds, betrayals, frame-ups! Cuocolo was a man who believed in no limits. He realized, little by little, the odium in which he was held—but thrust his head high, and defied the world around him. For a long time all his companions were cowed. Meanwhile, the chiefs of the society, aroused and angered, began to gather evidence against him.

As far back as 1903, certain robberies planned by Cuocolo as *basista* had not brought into the society the expected results. It was whispered that he had his favorites who with him pocketed the gains, turning over a pittance to the Camorra. It was noted, later on, that certain Camorrists who opposed him were sooner or later arrested and sent to prison. The affair of Nazzareno de Martiri, for instance, caused a good deal of angry comment among the "Honorable Brethren."

In the meantime, Cuocolo was growing in popularity among the members of the *Alta*, or Higher Camorra. He was seen hobnobbing with men and women of wealth and distinction. Erricone and his lieutenants began to fear that their power might be usurped. It was possible that this man might bring the Lower Camorra in complete subjection to the Upper clique. They determined to act. First they had to gather sufficient evidence of Cuocolo's traitor-

ous activities. Had he been a less powerful and influential member they would have speedily dispatched him by giving orders to a few zealous and ambitious *Picciotti.* They held him under continual espionage. Traps were laid, but Cuocolo did not walk into them.

At length a circumstance arrived which settled everything and confirmed the suspicions of Cuocolo's enemies. For this and its results, we must quote verbatim from Abbatemaggio's confession.

CHAPTER 3

REPORT OF ERMINIO CAPEZZUTTI, TELLING OF HIM WHO REVEALED THE TRUTH

"We, *Maresciallo* Erminio Capezzutti, commanding the station of foot-Carabinieri at Capodichino, together with Carabinieri Pinardi, Cataldo, Feola, Ugga, and Volpi, vested in our authority, hereby notify the proper judiciary officials:

"That, endeavoring to establish responsibility for the murders of the couple Cuocolo and Cutinelli, the first perpetrated at Torre del Greco and the other at Naples:

"We have sought the testimony of someone well versed in the ways of the criminal world, it being common talk throughout Naples that the facts concerning the double crime are known to a large number of Camorrists in the city.

"We have found this person in the noted Neapolitan Camorrist, Gennaro Abbatemaggio, aged 23, coachman, formerly living at No. 175 Via Chiaia, who, after considerable hesitation, has ended by declaring that he knows the full particulars of the crime. He is a friend and protegé, not only of Gennaro De Marinis, but also of Enrico Alfano. Both

of them are alleged to have had the greatest faith in him, and had informed him of the projected murders. They had also invited him to take an active part, but he had, at the last moment, refused, through repugnance for crimes involving bloodshed.

"Said Abbatemaggio, invited to reveal the facts of the crime, narrates as follows:

"On the night of August 7, 1905, at about 11 P.M., a robbery was to be committed at Chiatamone.

"It had been arranged by the noted Camorrists: Luigi Arena, Ferdinando de Matteo, Antonio Porcaro, Nazzareno de Martiri, Nicola Morra, and Gennaro Cuocolo. Besides these, two others knew of the project: Gennaro de Marinis, alias "The Cattle-Driver," and Enrico Alfano, alias "Erricone." These two, in case the robbery succeeded, were to acquire the jewels which it was hoped would be found in large quantities. Cuocolo, who usually bought stolen valuables, had this time offered to act merely as intermediary, claiming to lack the current moneys necessary for buying the jewels directly.

"On that night, at about 10 P.M., the above mentioned men, with the exception of de Marinis and Alfano, had already met and were ready to make the first steps toward committing the theft, when a certain vigilance in the marked house made them discuss the advisability of postponing it to another night. Then Cuocolo, somewhat nettled, said to the material executors: 'Let me warn you fellows not to *sgrassare*

(that is to say, not to hide and appropriate for themselves) any of the plunder. I don't want a repetition of the Croce del Lagno robbery! Let me warn you!' This alluded to a 'job' done at San Giovanni a Teduccio, in which 14,000 lire worth of jewelry had been stolen; and while the brethren had been given a mere hundred lire or so to divide among themselves, the material executor of the theft, a certain Pasquale Gaito, had become rich.

"At these words there was angry talk. Nicola Morra and Ferdinando de Matteo, both of whom were well aware that Cuocolo had procured the arrest of Gaito in revenge, began to curse him sharply. 'You ought to be ashamed,' they growled, 'to recall that incident . . . yes, about Pasquale Gaito!' Out of this there grew a strong dissension among the thieves, in which Cuocolo's side was only taken by his bosom friend Nazzareno de Martiri.

"Loudest among those opposing him was Luigi Arena who had, up to that time, believed Cuocolo to be a faithful brother. In no uncertain terms now, he began to regret the fact that they had taken him along as companion. He said, 'I am through. I give up this robbery!' The others were similarly minded, and, cursing angrily, went off after Arena. Cuocolo was left alone with Nazzareno de Martiri!

"Now, some time previously, four of the participants in this quarrel, namely: Cuocolo, de Martiri, Porcaro and Arena, had arranged to commit another robbery on the terrace of Ponte di Chiaia, in a

house which overlooks the bay. The argument at Chiatamone, however, changed matters. Arena and Porcaro, splitting with Cuocolo and de Martiri, decided to go ahead on their own. They came to an agreement with the chiefs who had projected this theft and received permission to proceed, (the *Basista*, or planner, being a certain 'Gennaro the Water-vendor,' who has a stand in the Piazza Santa-Maria-degli-Angeli, quarter of San Ferdinando).

"In the meantime, Cuocolo sought revenge for the affront which Arena had given him. He learned from 'Gennaro the Water-vendor' that Porcaro and Arena were determined to commit the Ponte di Chiaia theft by themselves. Thereupon he induced the 'Water-vendor' to betray them to the police. As a result, Arena and Porcaro were surprised and caught red-handed.

"Porcaro and Arena were both condemned to one hundred days of solitary confinement. Besides this, Arena was forced to serve three additional months for committing a crime while under special vigilance. And, after having served this term in the prison of Avellino, Arena was condemned to a long period of enforced domicile on the convict island of Lampedusa near Africa. This was during the month of March, 1906.

"Meanwhile rumors had spread throughout the criminal world blaming Arena's betrayal upon Cuocolo. Confirmation came from Lampedusa. Arena wrote from prison to his sister, *La Concetta*, whom he

had been obliged to leave in want, that he had been denounced to the police by Cuocolo. *La Concetta* communicated the note (which was written in the secret Camorrist code) to Erricone.

"Toward the end of April, de Marinis also received a letter from Arena complaining that Cuocolo had not been punished for his treason to the society. 'Neither you nor Erricone,' he wrote, 'lack the means for dealing with him!' This letter de Marinis communicated to Alfano, Morra and de Matteo, all three having been interested in the proposed robbery at Chiatamone. Later came another letter from Arena demanding that the *Vendetta* be pronounced against the traitor. This missive cut rather deeply, since it asserted that while de Marinis, Alfano, and the other chiefs, gave their hands to Cuocolo in full friendship, they apparently ignored the fact that one day he would surely have them all under his feet! It ended with the warning: 'Consider Cuocolo's wife, no matter what you may decide. She knows everything about her husband's affairs, and may prove even more dangerous than he!'

"It was just at this time that Cuocolo first slapped de Marinis and later on boxed Erricone's ears. . . . Things were getting tense. . . .

"This last letter determined the Camorrist chiefs to bring matters to an issue. The four men, Alfano, de Marinis, Morra, and de Matteo, held several meetings at the Caffe Gambrinus and the Caffe Fortunio. Urged on by Rapi, who was beginning to fear Cuo-

colo's growing popularity with the members of the Higher Camorra, they decided that Cuocolo's case should be dealt with at the coming meeting of the delegates of the Lower Camorra, when Andrea Attanasio was to be elected to membership.

"Fucci, as the figurehead of the society, called this meeting together. It was to consist of leaders from each of the fourteen quarters of Naples, and was ordered to assemble at 16 o'clock (4 P.M.), on May 26, 1906, in the Aida bar of the Trattoria Coppola at Bagnoli-Irpina, on the gulf of Pozzuoli, about five miles west and a little south of Naples."

Between thirty and forty Camorrists met at the time and place designated. It was a veritable banquet of death. There were, first of all, Erricone, the Supreme Chief and his figurehead, *Luigi 'o Gassusaro*, ("Louis, the Soda-Water Vendor"); *Tore 'e Sante*, ("Tore of the Saints"); Giovanni Bartilozzi, alias *'o Capigiovane 'e San Giovaniello*, ("The Foreman of Little Saint John"); Eugenio Scannapieco, alias, *Tore e Lucia*, ("Tore of Lucia"); all of these, Camorrists of the Porta Capuna district, together with delegates from the Mercato quarter: *Totonno Mezzapalla*, (Totonno the Half-bald"); and *Pasqualino l'Intagliatore*, ("Patsy the engraver").

The Camorrists of the Pendino quarter: Pasquale di Castichella; Matteo Valcasel, alias *Carlucciello*, ("Little Charlie"); *Z' Cavuottolo*, ("Uncle Barrel-Bellied"); and Nicola Morra, the one-eyed:

The Camorrists of the Porto quarter: Pasquale Palummiello, leader; Pasquale Gargiulo; and *Peppino 'o Mariuolo* ("Peppino the Robber"); in Gargiulo's company also came Andrea Attanasio, the new member, together with Alberto Flaumeno and Giuseppe Salvi:

The Camorrists of the San Ferdinando (the aristocratic) quarter: Vincenzo Lento, alias *'o Sorece*, ("the Mouse"), leader; Mariano di Gennaro; Vincenzo Bottiglione:

The Camorrists of the Pigniasecca quarter: *Carluccio 'o Cantoniere*, ("Charlie the Wine-Seller"); Ciccillo Esposito, alias *'o Cece*, ("the Cute"); *Totonno 'o Sereticcio*, ("Totonno the Stale"); and Giuseppe Minichiello, alias *'a Ribotta*, ("the Pistol"):

The Camorrists of the Avvocato quarter: Vincenzo *'o Sceme*, ("the Boob"); Vincenzo *Palluccella* ("Little-ball"); and Alfonso *Capaianca*, ("White-headed"):

The Camorrists of the Porta San Gennaro quarter: *'o Scalpellino*, ("The Scalpel"); leader; Bracco Nicola and Ciro Abbatemaggio:

The Camorrists of the Stella quarter sent no delegates; those of the Chiaia quarter sent *Tottono 'o Vraccio Muzzo*, ("Totonno the shrunken-armed"); and Gennaro Vittorio. . . .

Due to urgent private affairs, de Marinis was unable to be present, but made an appointment to

meet several of the participants outside the Caffè Gambrinus, that evening, in order to learn the decision.

At the Bagnoli banquet Cuocolo was condemned to death, and, at the suggestion of Morra, a similar sentence was passed upon his wife. Not only was she adjudged a traitress, but it was feared that if she were allowed to live she might betray her husband's murderers.

(It should not be imagined from Abbatemaggio's simple statement that the questions were put to vote and carried in the usual twentieth century parliamentary style. The Camorrists sat around feasting at tables, and quietly discussed the matter. At each table there was a head man who led the debate and who was responsible to Alfano for those around him. A stranger would have noticed nothing unusual in the scene. But at stated periods Alfano passed from one table to another and carelessly conversed with the sitters, meanwhile watching their thumbs. Thumbs pressed up meant death. The sign made, he passed on to the next, and so on, until the head of the table had had time to put another question. All had been secretly told, beforehand, the nature of the questions to be decided and their order.

Neapolitans, with their wonderful sign language made up of hundreds of scarcely perceptible gestures, require few words to express their meaning. And the words of the Camorra are richly symbolic. In discussing the fate of the Cuocolos, they chatted

about whether berries, *coccole*, could be taken without accident along a country road, or whether a *coccolina* (sweetheart) would gossip if deprived of her *coccole* and if she would seek to discover by what means they had been taken from her . . . and so on. The stranger, even though he understood Italian and had a fair vocabulary of Neapolitan, would still have been none the wiser.)

Lots were drawn. The planning and material execution of the double murder was accordingly left to Erricone, Ibello, de Matteo, de Marinis, Morra, di Gennaro, Cerrato, Sortino, and Salvi. It was also agreed that a token, "a flower," be sent to Arena after the execution, as a sign of the society's faith.

CHAPTER 4

During the succeeding week, these men met in various places, principally at the home of Nicola Morra and Maria Stendardo on the Via dei Guantai Vecchi.

It was finally decided that Cuocolo should be lured to the suburban town of Torre Annunziata with the idea of planning a robbery at a villa there, and that on the way he should be killed, while at nearly as possible the same time his wife should be slain at the apartment in the Via Nardones. How this plan was carried out, is related by Abbatemaggio as follows:

"At 15.30 o'clock (3.30 p.m.) on June 5, the day of the crime, Morra, Sortino and di Gennaro met at the Caffe Festa, and after conversing together, Morra went to the Porta del Carmine, where Cerrato was waiting for him; and together they went on to Torre del Greco, on the *Piazza* of which they separated to await the arrival of Cuocolo and his companions.

"Sortino and di Gennaro, who had been left in Naples, went punctually to the appointment in the Piazza Gerolomini, to which Cuocolo came about 16.30 (4.30 p. m.), being half an hour late. All took the trolley car and went to Torre del Greco.

"Arriving at the piazza of Torre del Greco, they were joined by Morra, who led the way to the lower part of the town by the sea, where a country lane leads toward Torre Annunziata.

"Di Gennaro was armed with the execution dagger furnished him by the Camorrist Vincenzo Alimmaglia; Morra with his own dagger; Sortino with a Sicilian long-knife and a revolver given him by Erricone and which latter Erricone had obtained from the Questura; Cerrato was provided with a clasp-knife and a double-barreled pistol which he had borrowed from Pascalotto Castichella, the head of the society of the Pendino quarter, and a cudgel which had been presented him by Papele, son of the said Castichella, who is now a sailor in the Royal service, and who is also a Camorrist. Moreover, di Gennaro had in his pocket a sharp kitchen knife with a strong haft which had been stolen from the Cuocolo apartment with the idea of placing it upon the body and, if possible, in one hand, so as to have it appear that the homicide was due to interference on the part of Cuocolo, and not premeditated on the part of his slayers. (Moreover, this was to furnish the complacent police with an excuse for not investigating further.)

"They had proceeded a few hundred meters down the dim Cupa Calastri, when Morra made a signal with his handkerchief to Cerrato, who was walking along some distance behind the group, he being unknown to Cuocolo. Cerrato hastened forward for

about fifty paces and then stopped in the shadow of some ancient arches.

"Instantly di Gennaro struck out at Cuocolo with the dagger. He, warding off the blow, pulled a penknife out of his pocket. (Abbatemaggio was unaware that this same penknife had been found in a lava crevice.)

"Morra stabbed him from the side, again and again. Sortino grabbed Cuocolo's right hand and bit it; in doing which he was slashed on the forefinger by the penknife. . . .

"Cerrato leaped into the group and, seeing that the powerful Cuocolo was fighting like a madman, gave him two or three blows across the forehead with his cudgel. The victim sank down to the road and, with his back to the ground, expired . . . they all stabbed him . . . then Sortino drew from the pocket of the corpse the latchkey of the apartment and also drew off from a finger a gold ring without a stone, but having in monogram "G. C.", the initials of his name. This ring was to be sent to Arena as a token that the vendetta had been carried out.

"Di Gennaro then pulled out the kitchen knife, which had belonged to the Cuocolos, and placed it in the right hand of the corpse.

"After this they all separated, and di Gennaro hurried to the inn of Mimi-a-Mare to relate that all was over. It was about 9 P.M. According to their arrangement, Erricone was having dinner there with his brother Ciro, Gennaro Ibello (chief of the subur-

ban Camorra, in whose domain the crime had been committed), and Giovanni Rapi, together with Erricone's coachman Iacovitti. Entering, di Gennaro saluted Erricone and said that all was done. The other answered, 'It is well. I will see you men tomorrow morning.' After having accepted a glass of wine, di Gennaro returned to the Piazza and rejoined the others.

"Not finding the car ready, they took a carriage and so arrived more quickly in Naples.

"On their arrival Morra said to di Gennaro to go over to the Massa side and keep an appointment with Salvi and then to bring him to the Caffe del Molo with Ferdinando de Matteo. The three ought then to walk outside until they were joined by Morra, Sortino, and Cerrato.

"When all were together, de Matteo gave Sortino a false beard and a jimmy, to be used in case the latchkey taken from Cuocolo was not the one to the apartment, and said that he and Salvi were to go to the house of Maria Cutinelli (Signora Cuocolo) with the greatest care.

"Without losing any time, Salvi and Sortino hurried to the Via Nardones. Sortino was dressed in black, with a dark-blue felt hat; he was disguised by the false beard. Little Salvi had a black velvet jacket and gray-checkered pants; he wore a cap and had large silk handkerchief tied around his neck. Both were armed with daggers and revolvers. Without being seen by the porter they mounted the stairs and

opened the hall door with the latchkey. Entering the small darkened antechamber, they drew off their shoes, and weapon in hand, stepped on tip-toes into the dining room. There they saw that the door leading to the bed-chamber was ajar. From the darkness they looked in.

"La Cutinelli was undressing, preparing for bed. The balcony window was closed and the shutters drawn. Like a bolt of lightning, Sortino precipitated himself into the room, and, clamping a hand on the woman's mouth, hurled her back on the bed, crushing her legs between his and then gagging her.

"At the same instant, Salvi stabbed her repeatedly all over the body with his dagger. . . . They saw that she was dead. A search of the room revealed a pair of earrings with diamonds of Holland rose and a gold brooch in the form of a dove. From a coffer they took eight banknotes of 50 lire and three of 100 lire and 98 lire in change. In a little packet there were four bonds of 300 lire each. From the top of the coffer, which had escaped the notice of his companion, Salvi took and concealed for himself a gold watch and chain belonging to Cuocolo.

"In order to make it appear that the slaying of la Cutinelli had nothing in common with the death of her husband, they turned out all the drawers, and then, still undisturbed, went away, after leaving Cuocolo's latchkey on the table in the *salotto*, going directly to the Caffe del Molo, where their companions were waiting for them. There they handed

all the booty into the keeping of de Matteo who, as *anziano*, "elder," was in charge of the murder gang. Then, on the advice of de Matteo, each went to his own house.

"In the morning de Matteo went to Erricone's and asked his decision as to how the booty should be disposed of. The latter counselled an equal partition. Then, after the former had reported in detail what had taken place on the preceding evening, Erricone made an appointment with him for 13 o'clock (1 P.M.), at the Caffe Fortunio in the Galleria.

"After that de Matteo went to the Caffe Romaniello, where he found di Gennaro, and together they went to the Piazza della Borsa, there to await the others. But first they went to the watchmaker's, Luigi Amato, a receiver and buyer of stolen goods.

"There they offered to Amato the earrings and the brooch, and took 118 lire for them. Then they went to the Piazza della Borsa, and from there, in two carriages, they all drove separately to the tavern of the Brecce, *'o Miezoiourno*, kept by Pasquale, the noted Camorrist, because on the Ponte di San Severino they could not very well make a division. At the tavern each received 153 lire.

"Meanwhile, Erricone, with his brother Ciro, de Marinis, and Ibello, were awaiting de Matteo in front of the Caffe Fortunio. Toward 14 o'clock (2 P.M.) they became tired and went away—all but Erricone and his brother Ciro. Finally, at about 15 o'clock (3 P.M.) de Matteo came and again asked Erricone

how he should sell the bonds. Erricone advised him to sell them to the Camorrist, Attasio Andreuccio.

"Before they separated they made an appointment for 16 o'clock (4 P.M.), before the Caffe Fortunio. Coming to this appointment, Erricone announced that he had made a bargain with Attasio to buy the bonds. He ordered de Matteo to go at once and take them to San Giovanni, where Attasio lived, and also to bring the ring which Sortino had taken from the dead Cuocolo and had on the same evening consigned to de Matteo; for Erricone was of the opinion that after that day they must not be seen together again in order to distribute the booty and to take further precautions: from that day on they were to observe the *Omertà* (Honorable Silence) between themselves!

"After dinner the bonds were sold to Attasio Andreuccio for 750 lire. In the evening the money was apportioned and the ring consigned to de Marinis."

This confession was signed and dated, February 3, 1907. Later on, at Caserta, Abbatemaggio amplified his statement with two important notes:

"On the morning of June 6, the day after the murder, at about 10.30 o'clock, I was with Francesco Desiderio (one of the Camorrists who had been present at the Bagnoli banquet) at the corner of the Via Nardones and the Piazza San Ferdinando, where Erricone was having his boots blacked. Along came Don Ciro Vitozzi, who said to Erricone (his godson)

that it would be well for him to return to Torre del Greco and be seen in the Mimi-a-Mare tavern in order to remove the suspicion that his presence there on the previous night had been prearranged. Or in his own words, '*Cumpà*, take some advice from me and return to that tavern immediately, because it looks like rain . . . *Ca mo cchiova*!'

"On June 7 I met Morra, Erricone, de Marinis, and de Matteo in the Galleria and made an appointment with them for the next day on the bridge of San Giovanniello, for it was Erricone's opinion that, although I had taken no part in the double homicide, I should, nevertheless, receive some reward in order to bind me. The next morning, between half-past ten and eleven, we were all at the place appointed, when Erricone, advising the utmost silence, said that Rapi had sent to him for distribution a reward of 1000 lire. Erricone proposed to give me 500 lire, since I had received nothing of the booty. This he later reduced to 400, and divided the remaining 600 lire among the others."

Aside from the motive, plan and execution of the double murder revealed by Abbatemaggio's confession, it confirmed certain points already known to Capezzutti: The wound on Sortino's finger produced by Cuocolo's penknife; the testimony of Iacovitti, Erricone's coachman, who had recognized di Gennaro as the man who had entered the Mimi-a-Mare tavern and had communicated with the diners there; the presence of Sortino and Salvi in the Via Nar-

dones at the time Cuocolo's wife was murdered revealed by Barbella and Lombardi; the presence of the husband's latchkey on a table in the Cuocolo's apartment; and finally the return of Erricone to the Mimi-a-Mare tavern ascertained by Delegato Ventimiglia and related to Captain Fabbroni. The confession also brought into prominence certain pieces of material evidence, the disposition of which might be traced: the bonds and jewelry taken from the Cuocolo apartment and the gold ring with the monogram "G. C.", drawn from the finger of the dead man!

What more was needed to allow arrests to be made with the certainty of subsequent indictments and convictions?

On Capezzutti's lips was fixed that same grim smile even as he signed his name to the complete report. He thought: "Naples is Naples." And he knew perfectly well that the "code of honorable silence," the invulnerable *Omertà*, still prevailed, still expanded wall-like, baffling, between him and his goal!

CHAPTER 5

The task confronting our musketeers remained extremely complex. It was well enough to find and convict the Cuocolo murderers. Their supreme duty—and one which still offered heartbreaking obstacles—was that of annihilating forever a deeply rooted criminal society, an institution, a social condition sprung from the malpractices of centuries! One portion of the net which they were weaving promised to entangle en masse the chieftains of the Camorra, namely: Abbatemaggio's allegation that the Cuocolos had been condemned to death at a meeting of the Camorra leaders held at a Bagnoli restaurant. Could they confirm this it would give them a whip hand over the heads of the secret society!

Captain Fabbroni decided for swift and semi-open action. He determined to emerge from the veil of secrecy under which he and his associates had worked. He communicated with the *Brigadiere* commanding the suburban Carabiniere station of Fuorigrotto and asked him to investigate the Bagnoli affair.

At the end of the week the *Brigadiere* sent in his report. It contained the depositions of the sisters Erminia and Elvira di Pierno, the proprietors of the Aida bar at the Trattoria Coppola, to the effect that

on the evening of May 26, 1906, between thirty and forty Neapolitans, a list of whose names was attached, had, indeed, dined at the tavern! This list corresponded with that furnished by Abbatemaggio! The Carabinieri were elated! For the first time the dawning sun of success shone on their efforts! But storms still lay ahead. . . .

Two women of the neighborhood, Carolina de Angeli and Isarnia Lorenzo, who had happened to enter the tavern while the banquet was going on, were quietly spirited to Naples. Here they identified several habitués of the Caffe del Molo and the Caffe Fortunio as having been at the feast. Capezzutti himself, as a *Picciotto* of the Camorra, readily ascertained that Atanasio had, indeed, been elected to the society at the same time and place!

This first success was followed by discouragement. Little satisfaction was received from Luigi Amato, who was alleged to have purchased the Cuocolo jewels, or from Attasio Andreuccio, the alleged purchaser of the bonds. Their interrogation was naturally indirect, for the Carabinieri still had to proceed cautiously. Nothing of value was learned from the two.

The other material evidence mentioned by Abbatemaggio was the ring. Here there was a ray of hope. Felicia Carusio, the maid of the Cuocolos, and Angela la Duardia, wife of the porter at 95 Via Nardones, both remembered perfectly Cuocolo's massive gold ring with its woven initials "G. C." Undoubtedly

the ring, the "flower" to be sent Arena, was in existence somewhere.

In his confession Abbatemaggio alleged that the ring had been consigned to de Marinis. Later he learned, and so informed Capezzutti, that it had been given to Giuseppe Salvi, together with 20 lire, that he might give them to Concetta, the sister of Arena, so that she could use the money and keep the ring for her brother. Salvi, however, spent the 20 lire and was said to have concealed the ring in his house at No. 2 Piliero in the second district.

It became necessary to get hold of this ring at all hazards, but without exciting the suspicions of the Camorra!

On February 7, Salvi was arrested on a trivial charge lodged with the Questura. On the following day Capezzutti, together with his faithful Carabinieri: Feola, Ugga, Silvestri and Petillo, all in civilian dress, made a domiciliary visit to Salvi's miserable home on the third floor of a wretched tenement. A long search failed to reveal anything. As a last resort, Silvestri began to slit open the mattresses. While taking apart the hemp stuffing of the last one (there were three in all), a little wad fell to the ground.

Salvi's mistress, a scrawny, yellowish, pursued-looking wench called '*a Polmonara*' (the woman who sells lung for cats), had listlessly aided in the search, not knowing just what it was they wanted. She cried, "Oh, something fell down!" and pounced upon

it. Noticing that it was a gold ring wrapped in a piece of paper, she added, "It must be a memento of Peppe's mother. . . ." Sternly Capezzutti took the package from her. The woman began to protest, thrusting out bony elbows, shrilling, insisting that she be given the ring. . . . "It belongs to my Peppe, to my Puppiniello. . . . It's a memento of his mother . . . it's Puppiniello's. . . ."

Capezzutti turned to his Carabinieri and gave orders. *A Polmonara* and three neighbors who had crowded in at the door and had witnessed the discovery of the ring were all taken to Carabiniere headquarters at Monteolivete and locked up!

The Carabinieri were now about to come out into the open for their final and most decisive movements. It was no longer time for secrecy.

At Capodichino, that afternoon, Capezzutti pondered the matter carefully. Finally, determined, he made out a report of the find and sent one copy to Carabiniere headquarters and a second to the municipal authorities of Naples! In doing this latter, he knew perfectly well that the Camorra would learn not only that the ring had been found but that the *Reali Carabinieri* were investigating the murder of the Cuocolos!

Fabbroni, who sped to Capodichino immediately on being apprized of the find, was brilliant-eyed with anticipation of the approaching conflict. "You have done right, *Maresciallo*!" he exclaimed. "From now on let the facts come out. Let everything become

common property! We can expect to gain the advantage from such intelligence becoming known!"

Capezzutti saluted his superior.

"We can profit from the fear and confusion of our enemies now. They will betray themselves by their actions. We have gone too far ahead now—we cannot be stopped!"

Both laughed. They had already caused the Questura to make certain arrests on charges that gave no indication of the real motive at work, in order that they might observe the relations between these prisoners and the civil police when the great news became known . . . and the time had now come!

CHAPTER 6

Wily tricks followed upon tricks. . . . What a joke that the Camorra should be whipped by subterfuge! The Carabinieri now decided to lay out a long-spread net for Rapi—Rapi, the friend of princes and magnates, the man who felt himself immune in his high citadel of political influence!

Fabbroni suggested, "Let us have Abbatemaggio make out a new confession whitewashing Rapi!" And so it was done.

Two days after the finding of the ring at Salvi's house, they brought Abbatemaggio before the Examining Magistrate Romano and the public Prosecutor de Tilla, to whom the ring and Capezzutti's report had been sent. The young coachman was told to make out a deposition, describing the murder of the Cuocolos. This deposition was the same as that already in the hands of Capezzutti, save in one extremely pertinent detail, namely: it only mentioned Giovanni Rapi in a single instance—as having been present at the Mimi-a-Mare supper party—and in this instance it declared that he was ignorant of what was going on!

The high officials of Naples took down this confession with calm faces. And the three Carabinieri

smiled up their sleeves. It was clever, this baiting of Rapi, the man whose influence spread into the regions of the Upper Camorra! He was to believe that he stood in no danger of being implicated in the case. Eventually they figured, his selfishness and egotism would betray him.

It appeared to the bewildered Neapolitans as though a conquering army had camped in their midst. Forty or fifty Carabinieri had for weeks been drilled in their roles at the *casa segreta* on Vomero. And now these assumed their allotted posts.

Confusion spread among the ranks of the Camorrists. Even the big chieftains did not know what to do. They were unaware just how much was known to their enemies. Rumors had it that young Abbatemaggio—who had disappeared from their midst—had made extensive revelations. But what? And who was implicated? The Carabinieri swore out warrants for nearly two hundred suspects. These warrants, however, they did not execute at once. They knew that every suspect was being warned by his friends in the judiciary or the civil police, and that the longer they refrained from executing the warrants the more panic-stricken would become the Camorrists—they would make plans for flight—they would prepare witnesses to prove their alibis—they would seek to implicate others—and all would be observed and noted by the Carabinieri!

Things began to happen as expected. The graveyard priest, Don Ciro Vitozzi, came to the fore again.

Again his dingy cassock was seen darkening the thresholds of powerful but now apprehensive officials. Again he wove his web of lies in order to implicate the two ex-convicts, de Angelis and Amodeo, by means of the police spies Ascrittore and Parlati, little suspecting that every move made by the conspirators was known to the Carabinieri. . . .

His dark eyes poured lightning from behind their iron-rimmed glasses as functionary after functionary shrugged shoulders in a gesture of despair at his exhortations and covert threats. In police and judicial circles consternation reigned. An ill-defined, but augmenting dread of approaching calamity, caused officials to proceed with caution before they used the evidence fabricated by Padre Vitozzi and his satellites in order to bring about the new arrest of the "straw criminals" for the double murder. "What can we do, dear Don Ciro?" they kept repeating. . . .

"Do? Why, bring the true murderers to justice, for I swear that all these rumors which are spreading through the city are nothing but diabolic lies. The true murderers are known. They have been revealed through the offices of me—" beating his fist against his breast— "of me! *Di me*, Ciro Vitozzi! and yet you are unwilling to act. But in Heaven, yes in Heaven there will be Justice! There is a tribunal from which none can escape!"

What can we do? . . . What can we do? . . . What can we do? . . . was the reiterated cry. . . .

Don Ciro held his head upright, his face livid with anger. Could it be possible? Had things come to such a pass that his word was of no avail in stirring the officials of Naples to the desired action?

"Damnation!" he kept growling between his teeth, fumbling with nervous fingers on the revolver—his breviary—which he ever carried over his breast. . . . "Damnation! I will make my enemies pay for this. Eventually they will pay with their heart's blood. And I, Ciro Vitozzi, will do it! Damnation!"

A flood of light is thrown on the prevailing condition through a letter addressed by Ascrittore the plethoric spy, to his old friend, Cavaliere Carmarino, Police Questore at Bari, who will be recalled as the medium used by Vitozzi to fasten suspicion upon de Angelis and Amodeo in June and July of the previous year. This letter is dated Naples Feb. 13, 1907, and reads as follows:

"Illustrissimo Sig. Cavaliere:

"After a long silence I am constrained to write herewith to tell you that Naples is the only city of Italy without justice, as you know full well on account of the preceding events to which I have referred. In regard to the assassination of the Cuocolo couple, after a long investigation nothing has resulted—just as nothing is expected to result from work done by the Carabinieri.

"So I again placed myself upon the track of the 'real murderer'; it is now more than a fortnight since

I found him, and became intimate with him, and gave him something every day, so that I am 50 lire out. You know that the murderer and others are furnished with caps of the Electric Company, and hope to turn a good thing this week.

"So I went to the police. After having declared all the facts, they are now convinced that these (de Angelis and Amodeo) are the real murderers —for there are now two, as I made known to the police.

"Well, what do you think? The police have not the courage to order their arrest! Then the agent, Sig. Cav. Ippolito, repaired to the Public Prosecutor (de Tilla who, of course, was already in possession of Abbatemaggio's confession), using my name. But the Signor Public Prosecutor did not wish to issue an order for arrest, saying that de Angelis was already under surveillance.

"But all the same, whatever the R.R.C.C. (Reali Carabinieri) have done is for the best, since the real criminals are at liberty. But at any moment they may collect money and take flight; so this very morning I went to the Hon. Pasquale Placido and told everything.

"But the Hon. Placido said to me that he could do nothing, as he had been retained to defend the Mandriere ("The Cattle-Driver," that is, Gennaro do Marinis, who had already been warned of his impending arrest.) My fear is that the lawyer may denounce me (to the Camorra) and that I face the

fate of Cuocolo, although I have the consciousness of having told the simple truth.

"Therefore I beg you to occupy yourself with this matter that light may shine and that you shall have done justice a great service. I hope that you will wish me to communicate with you by telegraph, otherwise my information may not be fresh and some day my letters may become a 'document.' Again I declare myself to be your most devoted servant."

This letter and others of similar import came into the hands of Captain Fabbroni; and so, in spite of Ascrittore's fear, what he wrote served as a "document" after all!

The three consummate enemies of the Camorra, Fabbroni, Farris and Capezzutti, worked night and day. "What are we to do next?" was the constant thought. One matter engrossed them. How about the "Upper Camorra"—that phalanx of office holders and aristocrats who gathered the poisoned fruits of the Camorra? For, after all, the entire society was like a tree. The Lower Camorra formed the life-bearing roots: they did all the dark, the criminal work—they it was who labored in the blackness and mire of vice. . . . The Upper Camorra formed the fruit-bearing tree. They received innumerable benefits in exchange for the immunity which they granted the Lower or criminal Camorra! What was to be done? Fabbroni maintained his first opinion: "that when the roots are destroyed the whole tree will die.

The 'Upper Camorrists' will scatter, glad to escape unscathed. There is no iron-bound tie among them as among the lower ranks. The *criminal* Camorra is the life of the entire organization, the tool that does all the work. Once destroyed it will leave the upper clique like men disarmed!"

It is no exaggeration to state that there was at that time hardly a member of the Questura or the judiciary of Naples who was not more or less under the influence of the Camorra. While some were deeply affiliated with the society, and formed that entente among themselves—the so-called Upper Camorra, others accepted conditions as they were, only waiting for the time to come when they might break from the criminal bonds that held them. Even these latter were divided into two classes: those who were willing to bring the real murderers of the Cuocolos to justice but who, through fear, would not acknowledge that the murder was a Camorra execution, and those who freely acknowledged the existence of the Camorra as the most powerful criminal organization of modern times and were ready, if convinced of success, to aid in bringing it to justice. These last officials were of great service to the Carabinieri, not only in securing witnesses against those implicated in the Cuocolo murders, but also in revealing the bonds which held the police and judiciary of Naples to the Honorable Reformed Society!

Everything was becoming known. Members of the Upper Camorra found, all at once, that they

did not recognize their secret friends of the slums.

"Ha—ha—ha—" laughed the Carabinieri, "There is a most purifying process spreading throughout Naples! How virtuous everyone is becoming!" But they did not laugh long.

Out of the whirl of events shot a sudden report, disheartening, dumbfounding: "Erricone has disappeared—gone, no one knows where to!"

The critical moment had arrived—the moment for which they had waited so long, for which they had gone through so many perils! Instantly, Fabbroni gave out the order: "Execute the warrants! Arrest them all!"

The time had come! . . . The net was drawn up full! . . .

CHAPTER 7

Right, left, out of their hiding places, Camorrists were ferreted, caught, manacled. . . . In one night, that of February 15, over three score were gathered in—big and little fellows, sharks and small fry: de Marinis, Fucci, de Matteo, Morra, bosses and hirelings. They were indignant, these big chieftains, they were outraged, at the idea of being manacled together with their henchmen. But protests and noisy threats availed them nought. Before the first of March nearly two hundred were roped in by the Carabinieri. Prisoners were taken at all hours of the day or night—from the cafés, from the streets, from their homes—and driven in closed, guarded carriages out of the city.

Whither were they being taken? They didn't know exactly. Terrifying reports had gone around. They were being dragged before a fearful judge, a giant, a veritable Rhadamanthus, cumbrous-browed and stern. . . . Off they were whirled, off, to Capodichino. And there, tall and imposing in his full uniform as *Maresciallo* of Carabinieri, stood awaiting Erminio Capezzutti!

What! Was this not Gaetano Serra—the escaped bandit? What could it mean? And then in their

minds flashed the thought, like a twist of lightning: Black magic, this is—*Stregoneria! Stregoneria!*

One by one he put them through a severe interrogation. Their morale crumpled, their courage ran to water . . . they became confused, they told things best unsaid, they contradicted themselves, they fell into verbal pitfalls. . . . And all the while, mercilessly, unceasingly, the giant Carabiniere's questions kept leaping at them like hungry bloodhounds. . . .

Dazed, they were thrust out of the Carabiniere station, across a flash of sunshine, and again bundled into the dark, closely-guarded carriages . . . the horses were given the whip—and down they were whirled, down into the city. They had hardly time to realize that the nerve-wracking interrogation had ended. . . .

But an ordeal still more terrifying lay ahead! They were driven up to Carabiniere headquarters at Monteolivete. And there another judge, a Minos, tenacious, implacable, inexorable, awaited them! They found themselves face to face with Captain Carlo Fabbroni—the Unknown Carabiniere whose secret hand had worked against them from the start, and upon whose traces they had been unable to fasten. . . . Here he was, seated at his desk and armed (what they did not know at first) with a most dreadful weapon! For while they were being driven down, the telephone between Capodichino and Monteolivete had been kept busy—and here was Fabbroni, knowing everything which they had said to Cappez-

zutti, and ready to question them anew, to confound and demoralize them still the more.

Out of this room they staggered sickened, disheartened, feeling for the first time the black pall of doom which was settling over the Camorra! And in their cells most of them spent the night moaning. The world, for them, was indeed coming to an end!

The Carabinieri gave their prisoners no rest. The very next morning they were turned over to examining magistrates in whom Fabbroni had faith, and allowed to make statements. There too, they were confronted by witnesses who had also been gathered in. There too were wild scenes. When confronted by Abbatemaggio, tiny Salvi, like a venemous, infuriated rat, tried to leap up at his throat. "Traitor! Traitor!" he shrieked as they dragged him away—"Traitor! Traitor! Son of Is-Kerioth!". . . But shrieks were of no avail. Protests, denials, tears, threats—all proved futile . . . and . . . little by little the Camorrists were made to realise the perfection of the net which the Carabinieri had woven around them!

A few were allowed to go, but under the most secret and strict surveillance; others were shut up in Sant' Efremo, that same gloomy prison, anciently a monastery, from whose high portals, the five "martyrs" had, on a previous summer's day, made their triumphant exit, smiling at the strangle hold which they held over Neapolitan justice!

And Erricone, the chief culprit? Where had he

disappeared? Apparently he had slipped out of the country. But whither? North America? Argentina? The Carabinieri were unable to discover. Reiterated reports came from widely separated points, alleging the chief Camorrist's presence—but invariably these were disproved!

And Maria Stendardo—the "Beauty"— had also been arrested. For a moment the fair, silent woman lost her self-possession. On seeing Capezzutti and Farris, both as Marescialli of Carabinieri, standing in her doorway, she dug twisted fingers into her hair, and shrieked. It was a cry that tore its way out of the heart, a cry containing all the sorrow, the regret, the horror of her twisted, hapless life! This woman, whose features had once been those of a Sistine Madonna, was now crying out with red, carnal lips, white-faced, anguished, writhing her plump white arms on which the bracelets jingled.

But self-possession, and that certain calm pride which was inherent in her, came to Maria the "Beauty." The next morning she stood before the examining magistrate and said:

"I declare myself absolutely innocent of all these crimes which they are trying to fasten upon me!

"Yes, I have been the paramour of Nicola Morra. But our relations have been true and sincere. He visited my home only by day. And it is false that meetings were held in my house to discuss murder. False! False! *Signore*—I deny it all! My home

on Via Guantai has never served as a market for crime!"

The examining magistrate smiled at his secretary and whispered, "*Si!* Pure as a dove. . . ."

The secretary frowned. "Lies—that is all we'll get from these people: denials—lies!"

Back into her cell was bundled Maria, there to remain (as did the other Camorrists) for five years, to grow fat and dull, to become like a white bloated corpse washed up out of seas of the dead!

And only twice did her gloomy mother come to hover outside the prison walls. . . .

The first paralyzing shock once past, the Camorra girded for battle. The Honorable Reformed Society had been too long trained to the maxim, "one for all and all for one" to be disheartened. It had beaten the government before. Its chief defence was the most effective, being the simplest: the *Omertà*—that code of silence which admitted nothing, confessed nothing, denied everything. Quickly alibis were fabricated, lawyers mustered.

First they held forth the golden hand of the temptor. Fabbroni found himself offered enormous bribes, a life position as Questore, favors right and left—if he would only be a little lenient, if he would only wink a little, only allow them a tiny loophole through which to wiggle out. . . . The Captain proved incorruptible. Thereupon they began to threaten him and his assistants. But what were

threats to these men who had successfully passed through the shadow of death—especially to big, grinning Capezzutti?

Undaunted, the Camorra persevered.

Don Ciro Vitozzi, their "guardian angel," worked early and worked late. From official to official (men who had previously eaten out of the palm of his hand) he went. But all to no purpose. He could induce neither the delinquent police nor the judiciary to act openly against de Angelis and Amodeo. When he became convinced of the hopelessness of his efforts, he veered off on another tack and attempted to suborn witnesses to testify that there was a conspiracy among the Carabinieri against the municipal authorities of Naples.

His labors, however, were rudely interrupted. On the evening of April 30, 1907, his home at Poggio Reale was suddenly invaded by Carabinieri and the "guardian angel" was whisked off, minus wings, to run the gauntlet at Capodichino and Monteolivete. His house was thoroughly searched; and aside from the romantic material discovered, there were unearthed numerous documents, letters and notes, some of them from persons of the highest rank, including one from the Queen Mother. And among these papers was also found ample proof revealing the nature of the campaign he had been carrying on.

(In prison! Don Ciro Vitozzi in prison! He wrapped hands around his head. No. He would

not remain idle, he would not rot here, decay, run to seed. . . . No! No! He would fight on. Even in prison he, Don Ciro Vitozzi, would fight on!)

He called for paper and pen—he was going to tackle the enemy—he was going to write of the iniquity stamped upon his character, his, Padre Vitozzi's!—he was going to send it out, the story of his arrest, of the Carabiniere conspiracy, to all the newspapers. His word still carried weight in Naples, in Italy, in the world! He would not give up! He would still fight.

All afire, Don Ciro wrote:

"Sadly alive in my soul is the fatal night which passed between the twilight of April 30, and the dawn of May, 1907! I had ended my accustomed duties in the cemetery of Poggio Reale where I was passing my days amid scenes of tears and mortal appeasement. And quietly, at 6 P.M., I approached my home, my own sanctuary. It was about 10 P.M. when, raising my voice in a prayer to the Supreme Lord, a prayer for the soul of my beloved mother, I sank back upon the bed and gradually fell asleep. . . .

"All at once, in the silence, confusedly, out of my dreams, I became aware of a racket—footsteps—excited talking—coming up from the entrance hall of the building . . . then I heard the voice of my old porter, Nicola, raised in angry protest. At the same moment burst out the jangle of the door bell.

"I leaped from my bed. I thought: something

grave has happened—and in my mind flashed the idea that perhaps sacerdotal ministry was needed at some unhappy bedside. . . . Thus, without hesitating, I hurried to the door and opened it.

"What was my surprise at finding myself confronted by a man in citizens' clothes, flanked by five or six others, also in civilian attire, while behind them in the darkness, glimmered a number of Carabinieri in full uniform! Thinking that a mistake had been made, I turned to the man who apparently captained that maniple of agents and said:

" 'Pardon me, whom are you looking for—?'

" 'For you yourself, Don Ciro Vitozzi!'

" 'For me? At least tell me what is the reason.'

"Brusquely and arrogantly, he replied: 'I am Lieutenant Jovine of the *Reali Carabinieri.* Here is a warrant for your arrest. I'll have to ask you to follow me.' Saying which, he held forth a folded paper.

"I, amazed, half-adream, took the warrant. It was, as he had said, an order for my arrest.

" 'I protest! I protest!' I cried. My young nephew, Arturo, who had followed me to the door, now burst into tears. I wheeled toward him and whispered, 'Arturo! Arturo! Quick—go to my lawyer—tell him to come here—immediately!'

"Lieutenant Jovine interposed harshly: 'It is useless to call a lawyer. He wouldn't help you in any way. You'd better come with us. Come—I say!'

"Strengthened by my conscience, I dressed hur-

riedly and, taking with me a rosary and a precious relique of Saint Janarius, said, 'I am ready, sirs.' Whereupon they led the way down the stairs . . . and I found myself descending into darkness, leaving behind my relatives. . . .

"On the steps they began their inquisition. They bound me so tightly that blood almost burst from my wrists. A carriage waited outside in the night. I was thrust into it and whirled away to the Carabiniere station. I dread writing it. It was about 4 A.M. The room into which they led me was unfurnished save for a table, a lamp, and several chairs. That sallow light shone on the large bare walls in a sinister manner, and brought out all the evil in the faces of men who loomed around staring at me intently. Trembling, I stood there. And now, to one side, a door flew open, and a tall person, diabolic, wild-eyed, strode in. He nodded me to a chair which stood in front of the table and, taking his place on the other side of it, began harshly:

" 'Well, Don Ciro. You are now in our hands. And let's talk frankly to one another. If you respond sincerely, I promise that things will be adjusted to your liking. If not—' he made an expressive gesture. 'Now nobody need even know that you have been arrested. We can fix up everything before dawn. Here's what I want. As you know, conditions in Naples are rotten. A heavy hand is laid upon private property. The *Mala Vita* is arrogant, imposing its law upon the citizens. All

this could not happen without the authorities countenancing—perhaps aiding it. They do that very thing, I am sure! They give these criminals free hand; they protect them, they keep them immune from their just deserts. Now let us talk plainly, Don Ciro. You are acquainted with most of these officials; you know the inside workings of the whole affair. And surely, as good citizen, you won't hesitate for a moment to give your testimony and even to sign your name to a small statement which I shall dictate. You will be rendering a great service to humanity thereby!'

"'*Signore*!' I replied, 'What is this? I do not quite understand what you mean. I—'

"'Silence! Wait till I am through speaking. Listen to me carefully; and then you may have your say. Now, to resume, you know the people who are giving protection to the criminal world. I need not go into details. We understand one another well. Now make up your mind. Remember, I want you to sign your name to an affidavit telling the truth about this matter.'

"'I refuse!'

"'What . . . ?'

"'I refuse, Signore, for I know nothing about it. . . .'

"'You don't, hey?'"

Thereupon, continued Padre Vitozzi, they began to slap, punch and kick him. Again and again they beat him over the head with a cane. He bled from

many wounds. Then, handcuffed "like a vile criminal," he was thrust back into the carriage and led off into another inferno, another bitter interrogation . . . this time before Captain Fabbroni, more suave, but even more pitiless.

Finally, he was hurried off to jail, whose iron gates he reached just as May, the golden-veined, was dawning above the eastern hills. The warden expressed surprise on beholding him. "He marvelled to see me arrested. At my request, he allowed me to read the order for my confinement. It stated: 'The charge is unknown: By order of the Examining Magistrate.' And with those very words he recorded it in the prison register, where it can be read even now.

"Then I was led to a cell. My God! What horror! What terror! Imagine a narrow, dark, foul-aired den: two wooden benches, a cot with black, woolen, vermin-crawling coverlet, bars across the door and window-slit . . . cut off from all humanity, from all happiness, from all sunshine. . . ! Lord, my Lord, have pity upon me! That was my first wild cry. Then sobbing, I raised my eyes to heaven—for heaven was still there overhanging this den—and begged: 'O Thou, Thou God of Justice, Thou God of Truth—Thou must free me from this iniquity!' "

He had finished. He threw down his pen. Then he gathered up the sheets of paper, read them over carefully, corrected words here and there.

Don Ciro called for his lawyer. He said: "Here! Have these sent off to all the newspapers—make copies immediately! Send it off to all! to all! to all!"

In duress—the strange dark angel of the Camorra—in duress! A genius he was, even in prison, a genius who might have reached tremendous heights had he started in the right direction, had all the illimitable energy within him cast roots in proper soil. But now every word of his, every thought, was armed for the struggle with the Carabinieri. And his genius was foredoomed to shine with its greatest and most baleful splendor four years later, under the sinister shadow of the Great Trial!

CHAPTER 8

"Erricone is arrested! Erricone is taken!" ran the cry throughout the city. . . . The newspapers brought out extra editions for the gaping populace —for the many who had bet that Erricone, the "prince of men," would never allow himself to be caught. "Where? How? When?"

In New York.

The night of April 17, 1907 saw the American metropolis covered by a fine mist, waves of which thickened occasionally to mizzling rain. The city, like a bronze sphynx, raised its head, glossy, enigmatic, for within its breast, among its oblongs of gray and shining black, its night-starring lamps, were passing men of mystery. A few squares to the west of the Bowery runs Mulberry Street, a weird, hybrid outgrowth of Italo-American life, a jumble of Calabrians, Sicilians, Neapolitans, colorful by day with its market scenes, but now sinister and black. Here there trailed inscrutable men, alien to the placid majority, yet dear to the sphynx. Here there loitered groups watching other groups.

Intermittently, one by one, these men would stop in front of the basement at number 108, peer fur-

tively around, and then slink down. There would be a sudden upward glowering in the mist—and again darkness. . . .

Downstairs, the basement was dimly lit by gas. At tables around sat a score of Italians variously playing cards or sipping wine. They were conversing in a low undertone. At the head of the room sat a swarthy man, evidently the master, leaning back in his chair and calmly surveying his fellows. This man was Erricone. With him at the table were two other Camorrists, both *all' Omertà*, "at attention" to the great leader. His lips were set in an ambiguous smile. The scar on his cheek was a subdued pink.

On first disappearing from Naples, Erricone had gone to hide with influential friends in the provinces. Thence he made his way clandestinely to Marseilles, where he obtained false passports and, under an assumed name, embarked for New York, arriving aboard "La Touraine" on March 17, 1907.

In New York he found himself among friends, old "Milites" of the Camorra, who had emigrated and set up their stands in the western metropolis. He took lodgings at 7 Jones Street and immediately began his daily triumphal rounds of the Italian quarters, accompanied by a numerous "escort of honor." These were friends, ex-Camorrists and new acquaintances who followed the Chief of the Camorra wherever he went, gazing upon him with eyes of admiration and awe. Erricone established temporary headquarters in several large restaurants and cafés of

the Mulberry-Bend section where, hourly, visitors came seeking a presentation to the famous Neapolitan Camorrist. And he, with lavish hand, scattered gold right and left, squandering, what with gifts and tips, over $14,000 during the first week.

When friends whispered to him about the American police and especially about Petrosino, chief of the Italian squad, Erricone would shrug his shoulders. Petrosino? What of him? What could he do? And would this Petrosino dare tackle the great Erricone?

At the end of the first fortnight a huge banquet was tendered him—a banquet at which crowded the full flower of Italo-American criminal life, captained by *'o Schiavone*, chief of the Mulberry-Bend underworld. This was held at the restaurant *Corona di Ferro* ("Crown of Iron") on Grand Street. And during the fraternal symposium all the participants remained respectfully *all' obbedienza*, ("In attitude of obedience" to the supreme Camorrist!)

But the surly hierarch of crime, ever ambitious, ever seeking new regions to conquer, was not a man to vegetate amid banquets and fêtes. He began to cast his dark, hungry eyes around. What opportunities did America offer? What profits would an elaborate organization like the Camorra reap in this land of gold?

Friends warned him. Of course they, and other ex-Camorrists, would be glad to aid him in setting up a new Camorra here in America. But he was sure

to strike opposition, especially from the "Black Handers" who had been waxing rich from mulcting successful Italian tradesmen and "Men of Honor," and would resent any invasion of their preserves by a Neapolitan. "In the Black Hand," they said, "It's the Sicilian *Mafiusi* who boss!"

"The *Mafiusi*! What do I care about the damned *Mafiusi*? Do you think I am afraid? I will show them who I am!" Erricone's eyes flashed dangerously. He was ready to go and beard the Black Handers in their own stronghold.

Alfano's well-wishers shook their heads gloomily. They knew much more about Italo-American conditions than he dreamed. At least twenty-thousand escaped Italian criminals had settled in New York City. Here they had gradually coagulated into a loose entente called "The Black Hand," an organization which, unlike its Camorra and Mafia prototypes, was only criminal, having nothing to do with politics, and specializing mostly in extortion and blackmail. One section of the Black Hand, for instance, maintained headquarters in a large hotel near the Metropolitan Opera House, and exacted weekly tribute from the chorus singers. Other sections, more or less independent of one another, were scattered throughout the country. Most of these "Black Handers," however, had been recruited from the Mafia—the sister society of the Camorra, which held sway over the entire island of Sicily. And for every *Camorrista* in the American organization there were

at least seven or eight *Mafiuss'*. Historically the Mafia had started at the very opposite pole from the Camorra. It had burst from a soil fertilized by the blood of martyred patriots; it had been the revolt of an outraged people against the misgovernments of foreigners. With time the Mafia had degenerated, till it grew to live entirely upon extortion and crime; while in America its emigrés had fallen to the lowest depths of vice.

Erricone's friends kept warning him: these Sicilians were looking askance at the Neapolitan Camorrist. Counterforces were beginning to stir against him. Invariably, as answer, Erricone would shrug his shoulders and mutter: "I am not worrying."

What they feared, and what he made light of, was the fact that anonymous letters, denouncing him, had started to rain into the lion's mouth at police headquarters. One of these, written the very day following Erricone's secret arrival, informed the authorities of the fact. Others, from "Men of Honor," were directed personally to Petrosino—he who had proven a bulwark for them in the past—and begged him to save them from this new menace.

Petrosino had turned the letters over to his chief. The Italian authorities had been consulted sub rosa. Cable messages were flashing back and forth. . . .

But Erricone, finding himself unmolested, decided to start his new organization by establishing a rendezvous for himself and his friends. And here,

in this basement at 108, he had opened a gambling saloon which he called *'o Zecchinetto*, "Zecchino" being the official *jou d'hazard* of the Camorra. "To hell with the *Mafiusi*!" he growled. . . . "If they want, let them come down here and play at *my* game!"

One of Erricone's companions was saying, "You know, chief, I was talking with *'o Schiavutiello* this morning, and he told me that Petrosino and his squad knew all about you being here."

"Hm. Perhaps they do."

"And that they had decided not to bother you."

"No?"

"No. But that they were having this place shadowed—so they could make trouble if they saw anything wrong. What I think is they want their palms greased."

"Hm. I suppose so."

"But anyhow, I think we're safe for the time being. (At that very moment Petrosino had received definite orders and was folding the paper, firmly, calling over four of his men.) "But of course—there's always this danger from the *Mafiusi*—"

Erricone snarled, "Damn the *Mafiusi*! Don't mention them to me again—do you hear?"

With a silly expression, the man turned silent. Erricone, sighing angrily, leaned back again in his chair. . . . Time passed . . . and after a while the scar on his face became again a complacent pink.

. . . He now seemed like a dark comfortable cat . . . one might almost have expected to hear him purr contentedly. . . .

There was a short wrangle at the entrance . . . a few sharp questions in undertone; and the man who stood on guard bounded down, deathly pale, mouth compressed, rounded eyes aglitter. Right over his frowsy head descended five men. Italians evidently. Strangers—that is, strangers to Erricone who shot a stern glance in their direction. Who were these intruders? A shudder had passed through the others. . . . They knew. . . .

The leader of these newcomers nodded to his companions, and the five of them marched across the room and sat down around a table. Silence had passed over the assemblage.

In every mind quivered the thought: Petrosino!

Knitting his brows, Erricone cast a questioning look at the Camorrist seated opposite him; and this latter leaned forward to whisper: "It's Petrosino!"

Petrosino—a name to terrify the Italian criminal, a name which had meant the electric chair for scores!

Instantly Erricone's hand cut like a blade into his pocket and clutched the revolver. The other whispered again: "Don't—for God's sake!—you are not in Naples!"

With a tremulous sigh the big Camorrist placed both his elbows on the table and remained staring at the detective. For a seemingly interminable period, their gazes burned in a straight line.

This Petrosino was a thick-set man, of middle height, with rugged features and dark, magnetic eyes, eyes that were said to recognize at least five thousand Italian criminals at first glance. Errícone thought: An absolutely fearless man! An impulse of masculine admiration for bravery struck him. In mutual fascination the two kept their eyes fixed on each other. . . .

Now, deliberately, after what had appeared to be a long reverie, Petrosino arose and approached the Neapolitan. Errícone sprang to his feet. The other Camorrists remained glued in their chairs.

"What is your name?" Cutting through the tense silence, the detective's voice startled them like a lightning flash. . . .

Bravado possessed the Camorrist. He realized it —the jig was up. He might as well be a "man of heart"—*omm 'e core*. And throwing back his head, eyes flashing, he answered in a voice of mingled pride, defiance, hatred:

"I am Errícone!"

A terrible thing happened—a thing unheard of in Naples—a thing that hurtled the Camorrist chieftain from his bragging heights. . . . For he had scarcely pronounced his haughty soubriquet, "Big Hal," when the detective's massive hand swung a semi-circle through the air and slapped him—bang! —full blast over the crimson scar! "So—you're Errícone, are you!"

Alfano staggered—the other detectives had drawn

their revolvers—the Neapolitans were cowed—the electric chair!—they knew what to expect were they to start any gunplay. . . . Fiercely, like a mastiff pouncing upon a rabbit, Petrosino grabbed him by the collar. . . . "Come along—So you are Erricone! —damn you—here, in this country, you can't get away with your schemes—damn you!" And shaking the dreaded Erricone as though he were a big rag, pushing and punching, Petrosino shoved him up the narrow stairs toward the street, where Alfano was bundled into a waiting "Black Maria"! Off to headquarters, there to be given a generous taste of American methods!

From nearby doorways peeked dark, elated faces. . . .

Slapped—punched—shaken like a rag! Erricone sat snarling in the cell, face buried in his hands, one thought in ascendance to take its dominant position over his mind, like an evil star, to glitter forever: Vengeance!

Powerful influences were brought to bear upon Washington for Alfano's release. But the American authorities, in this one case, proved stern. The United States Commissioner ordered him deported. The Italian Consul General was communicated with.

Alfano had come from France. Therefore he was to be sent back on the "Savoie" of the French Line. And as the vessel slipped out into the ocean mists, leaving behind the city of his brief sojourn, Erricone

bent his index finger and clamped it between his teeth. The sign of death! And he resolved: "I will, if it is the last thing I do on this earth, take vengeance upon that man Petrosino. . . ." He, the chief, had been slapped—punched—shaken like a rag!

Well might the American detective have worried, for the Camorra's arm was long, flexible, puissant, even though stretching out of prison walls!

CHAPTER 9

At Havre French gendarmes received Erricone with open arms and after the required formalities he was turned over to two Carabinieri who took him safely back to Naples and to the prison of Sant 'Efremo!

But the third outstanding leader of the criminal Camorra still walked the streets of Naples in liberty —*'o Professore*, Giovanni Rapi!

Rapi had been expelled from France in 1902 as a card sharper and crook. On January 24, 1908, almost a year after the wholesale arrests, he addressed from Naples a letter to the French Minister of the Interior asking permission to return to France. A limited sojourn was granted him. So the treasurer of the Camorra, natty and self-possessed as ever, started for Paris. Before leaving Naples, he held numerous consultations with the lawyers who had been employed to defend the imprisoned Camorrists, notably Lioy and Battaglia. He also interviewed several Neapolitan bankers and made arrangements through their agents in America to collect funds for the defence of the prisoners. Enormous sums were gradually massed in readiness for the impending battle against the government! Rapi kept insisting:

"Somehow, I have a hunch that this whole rumpus will blow over. What proof can those Carabinieri have gathered against our friends?"

The bankers repeated: "What proof—indeed?"

From May 17 until June 23, 1908, this international blackleg lived in Paris at No. 8 Boulevard Montmartre. He visited his usual haunts, the gambling clubs, and consorted with his former friends, the rogues of all nations who sooner or later make Paris their field of operations. He even cast his tentacles very high. Despite the storm clouds gathering in the South, he proceeded to formulate a scheme for opening a world-wide chain of brilliant gambling establishments in partnership with none other than Sir Basil Zaharoff, Europe's multi-millionaire man of mystery, owner of Monte Carlo, who is reputed to be the world's greatest financier!

But why had the Carabinieri allowed Rapi to slip from under their thumbs? Stories vary. Up to the time of his departure, aside from Abattemaggio's confession, Fabbroni had been unable to procure serious evidence against Rapi implicating him in the Cuocolo murders. On his departure, however, they were more successful, particularly *Maresciallo* Farris, to whom the members of the Circolo de Napoli became more communicative. As the weeks passed, the presence of Rapi became ardently desired by the Carabinieri. A ruse was devised to draw him back to Italy, and if that failed,

the Italian Government was prepared to ask the French Government for his extradition.

In Paris, Rapi became intimate with an Italian who called himself Count Meli, a Sicilian and soldier of fortune, who, over the wine, had once confessed to the Treasurer of the Camorra that he was no other than Failla Mulono, the famous Sicilian bandit and escaped convict. In reality, however, this new-found friend was neither count, bandit, nor Sicilian, but Antonio Feola, of the Reali Carabinieri, who had been sent to Paris to keep his eye on Rapi.

Early in July, Captain Fabbroni caused to appear in the Neapolitan papers a story to the effect that it was rumored that Abbatemaggio had accused the Treasurer of the Camorra of complicity in the Cuocolo murders. There was nothing definite in the accusation, however. In due time, the story reached Rapi in Paris, and, urged on by the pseudo-Count, he determined to return to Italy in order, as he told his friend, "to vindicate his honor." Rapi wrote indignantly to the Public Prosecutor of Naples, the Procuratore del Re, Cavaliere de Tilla, denying the allegation and boldly declaring that he would present himself before the Tribunal.

On July 23, 1908, he started for Italy. Although steps had been taken to apprehend him on the frontier, he managed to slip through to Rome unobserved, where he went to the office of La Tribuna and wrote a communication to the press, again protesting his

innocence and grandly declaring that he was on his way to Naples *per vendicare il mio onore!*

However, Rapi was not destined to see *la bella Napoli.* On the train, as it left Rome for the South, were two gentlemen who occupied Rapi's compartment. They were Erminio Capezzutti and Gaetano Sarvo, of the Reali Carabinieri. Both were in citizen's dress. Finally Capezzutti turned to Rapi and said:

"Where are you going, *caro Professore*?"

"I am going to Naples," was the simple reply.

"How stout you have become, *Professore*," continued Capezzutti, and then he grinned, adding: "Doubtless you remember me?"

"Your face is familiar, but I do not recall your name. . . ."

"What! Not remember me? I am *Maresciallo* Capezzutti."

"Indeed? I am glad to meet you again," returned Rapi cordially. "I am on my way to Naples to vindicate my honor. I heard in Paris much gossip about me, connecting my name with that Cuocolo affair. Tell me, what are they saying in Naples?"

When the train reached Sparanise, at the junction of the line to Gaeta, about 118 miles south of Rome, the three were joined by another Carabiniere, Antonio d'Erredità, and Rapi was invited to alight. He protested, almost violently, but his threats provoked no response. He was taken to the *Caserma*

dell 'Arma, where an order was secured from the authorities for his detention. After this, he was put on the local train for the prison at Santa Maria-Capua-Vetere.

During this short trip, Rapi seemed to have regained all his urbanity and confidence. He smiled in greeting as a group of newspaper reporters hurried aboard. "You see," and he nodded toward the Carabiniere . . . "these gentlemen inform me that the Royal Prosecutor wishes certain clarifications of facts from me. I am ready—at their disposal. *Voila tout. C'est la loi!*" And he shrugged as though to lend his words a subtle connotation. "Anyhow, I left Paris—and here I am. Last night, in Rome, I also went to the *Aragnon* where I visited my dear friend, Jean Carrere, your fellow journalist."

While on this short journey Rapi, to show that he was sure of himself, that he was ready for anything, that he had no fear of what the future might bring, kept chatting along, his nimble wit alighting now on one subject, now on another.

"You know, gentlemen," he said, with an enigmatic smile, "My return will spell the end of peace for many persons who would rather have had me dead than here. They knew I was gone—they had seen me depart—and in their minds they assumed that I would always remain at a safe distance. Gladly, therefore, they piled everything on my shoulders. All faults, all manners of blame were visited upon my head. And now, *me voici*. They shall soon

realize the pitfall into which their tactics have led them. Let me tell you a little story:

"Two fellow-travellers were once setting out from Paris in the same railroad compartment. One of them was an elegantly dressed gentleman and the other a still more fashionably apparelled lady. As is natural, with the passing of time and distance, they began to exchange casual words. The man, however, with sharp, expert eyes, noticed that his companion's gown presented peculiar curves and lumped surfaces; and also that, despite her efforts at dissimulation, the lady was counting the minutes in a state of extreme nervousness. Craftily, therefore, he sought to fathom her secret, and finally the woman, won over by the extreme suavity of his manners, confided in him as follows: that she bore with her almost two thousand lire worth of *dentelles* which she intended smuggling across the frontier. And with the border fast approaching, she was feeling more and more apprehensive at the thought of having to pass scrutiny by the sharp-eyed customs guards.

"The gentleman assured her, '*Madame*, there is very little danger. These things happen every day. Set your mind at rest.' *Et le voyage continuait plaisamment.* . . .

"Eventually the train stopped at the frontier. Excusing himself, with a bow, the gentleman left the compartment and disappeared in direction of the customs barrier.

"Within a few minutes the compartment door was

flung open and two customs agents appeared. Walking up to the woman, without any overtures, they gruffly told her to bring out the *dentelles* which she had concealed on her person.

"Instantly she understood: she had fallen victim to her own excessive faith. She had confided her secret to a customs spy!

"The *dentelles*, those valuable laces costing 2,000 lire, were thus confiscated.

"Sad and discouraged, the lady continued her journey. She lacked the power to utter a single syllable of reproach to her betrayer who had nonchalantly resumed his place in the compartment. However, when the gentleman, at the moment of alighting from the train, dared to address a cordial adieu to her, the woman, in an outburst of uncontrollable wrath, blurted: 'You are a rascal and a spy.'

"Curiously unperturbed, the gentleman demanded the reason for this affront; and she replied:

" 'What! Do you even dare ask me? You who have made me lose two thousand lire worth of *dentelles*!'

" 'And do you wish to make such an outcry over so little?' he retorted. '*Hein*! if I hadn't accused you, *madame*, who wished to smuggle a mere trifle of two-thousand lire, how could I have succeeded in a matter of something over one hundred thousand?' Saying which he showed her that he also had his clothes stuffed with the most costly and delicate *dentelles*.

Enfin, he conceded, 'Here, *Madame*, are your two thousand lire—and let us talk no more about it!' "

When he had concluded, Rapi drew in a long breath, puffed himself up, and beamed toward his audience. His eyes twinkled. He knew that they would draw certain conclusions from his anecdote. But what did he actually mean? Was he in the same predicament as that lady? Did some bigger culprits accuse him of a tiny fault in order to draw attention from a greater crime? And who could these be? The members of the Higher Camorra—the statesmen and nobles who undoubtedly practiced collusion with the criminal association, and who must have thereby certainly gained tremendous benefits? Whatever Rapi may have wanted to imply, his lips were sealed by the law of silence—the *Omertà*!

Shortly before the journey's end, he remarked: "They all reprove me for having gone to sup with Erricone. And yet how many functionaries have I seen, respectfully saluting that same Erricone!"

With a lurch, the train came to a stop. Through the windows glimmered the small white station of Santa Maria-Capua-Vetere. The Carabinieri and their prisoner arose. Silently, through the hushed, sleeping town they hurried. . . . And now, out of the darkness loomed the black walls of the prison. . . .

BOOK FIVE

VITERBO!

CHAPTER 1

With Rapi's arrest one of the central nerves of the Camorra was numbed. But the war kept raging on. Erricone, from his prison cell, found means to communicate continually with his fellow prisoners and followers. One thing had become an obsession with him: vengeance upon Petrosino! Vengeance upon Petrosino! The thought grew to abnormal proportions, monstrous, obfuscating everything else —even the dire need for preserving the Camorra.

Erricone had sworn vengeance. Thereafter the detective was spied upon continuously. In his prison cell, in Naples, Erricone kept himself minutely informed of every move made by his enemy across the Atlantic.

Petrosino suspected nothing of this. And even had he done so, he would have laughed it off. Careless ever about his life, he never really liked to think about the perils besetting him. He dismissed with a shrug all allusions to the Camorra's possible retaliation. "What the devil can those bums in Italy do to me? By God, I think they have their hands full without worrying about us over here!"

But Erricone had sworn vengeance.

One day big news was brought to the Camorrist suzerain. He showed his sharp teeth, and his eyes

glittered. At last! And he thought: "If this goes over right, I don't care what else happens to me! I will be satisfied, come what may!"

Petrosino had developed an elaborate scheme for co-operation between the American and Italian police. Besides this, he had, for a long time, wished to go over the European records of several hundred men whose names he had placed on a blacklist. If he could get the proper official proof, he might have them deported wholesale. ("Something like that dog Erricone who thought himself such a hell of a lot!") Petrosino determined to take a secret trip to Italy, stopping first at Rome and then at Palermo in Sicily.

From his cell in the gloomy prison of Sant' Efremo, Erricone issued orders. And when Petrosino sailed, early in 1909, disguised as an old woman, two Camorrist spies went along with him on the same ship. They held him under continual vigilance. He arrived at Rome. They shadowed him. He felt danger in the air—he transformed his disguise. But the watchful eyes (the two spies were outstanding *Pali* of the Camorra) clung tenaciously to him. . . .

From Rome to Palermo! When Erricone learned of this move he bit his lips. For Petrosino was now stepping out of his grasp into the domain of the Mafia. It was anything but politic for the Camorra to commit a vendetta in Sicily. It might antagonize the Mafia. And just at present the Neapolitans needed all the friends they could hold.

Secret communications were smuggled back and forth, by means of the *palomas*, between Erricone and the other Camorrist chieftains. After a swift consultation, they arrived at a conclusion, and Erricone gave a definite order.

Therefore, scarcely had Petrosino's ship drawn out of sight of land when an innocent-looking telegram was sent from Rome to a leading *Mafiuss'* of Palermo. And when the detective, the following afternoon, in guise of a travelling salesman, stepped down the gang-plank, there were numerous hidden eyes that marked him out at once. He made his way to a small but centrally-located hotel run by a rubicond German. Friends had assured him that the place was safe. He rented rooms there. He exercised the utmost caution in going in or out. But he was now doomed. Escape—even had panic seized him, had he determined to flee instantly from Palermo—would have been impossible! The eyes kept hovering around him. . . . Well. . . . He was there to get evidence. . . . The moment arrived. . . . And on the evening of March 13, while waiting for a car at the most populous corner of Palermo, Petrosino was shot down by unseen assailants!

Erricone received the report almost before the papers and news agencies. He jumped up in his cell. He raised his fist to heaven. "I have done it!" he exclaimed, "I have made him pay with his heart's blood for the insult he gave me! I have shown that my hand stretches far indeed! And now—and now—"

his eyes glared around as though at a hemming crowd of phantoms—"And now for the Carabinieri!"

The scorpion's tail still held a sting! The Honorable Reformed Society could still fight! If these stronger enemies, these Carabinieri, were too smart and wary to be caught by lead and steel, they could be beaten by other means. Wild, elated, frenzied, with his success, Erricone bellowed—and he didn't bother who overheard it in the echoing depths of the prison: "The Camorra will win out! The Camorra has triumphed over the government before—and the Camorra will triumph again!"

Now to carry the war into the enemy's camp—now while both sides were girding for the battle to be fought in court! Erricone kept sending out orders. Intimates of the Honorable Society, men high up in journalism, the legal profession and the police, were thrown—practically coerced—into this desultory battle.

Episode followed episode. The Camorrists manufactured evidence; they suborned witnesses. The Carabinieri fought back, causing many of the Camorrists' schemes to go boomeranging back.

There was the matter of the ring—Cuocolo's ring bearing the initials "G. C." which had been found by Capezzutti and his men at Salvi's house. Three days later a man in a costume resembling a cross between a cook and a gamekeeper, and with a Carabiniere cloak thrown over his shoulders, made his appearance at a goldsmith's shop in the Via Toledo and ordered

a gold ring to be made with the monogram "G. C." The ring was ready a week later and was called for and delivered. This circumstance was later used as the basis for the defense that the ring found in Salvi's house had been ordered from the goldsmith by the Carabinieri themselves and "planted" by them at Salvi's. Unfortunately for this contention, the goldsmith kept books, and the books showed the exact date when the ring had been ordered, that is, three days after the find at Salvi's house!

Padre Vitozzi had attempted to fasten the guilt of the Cuocolo murders on the ex-convicts de Angelis and Amodeo, on the ground that these two had with Cuocolo robbed and murdered the priest La Mura and his maid-servant at Gragnana in December 1902, and that Cuocolo had turned traitor, thus furnishing the ex-convicts with the motive of revenge for slaying him.

On March 14, 1910, the examining magistrate of Fuorigrotto was visited by a swarthy woman who described herself as Irene de Angelis, living at 158 Corso Vittorio Emanuele, in Castellamare, and a cousin of the ex-convict. She denounced de Angelis, Amodeo and Cuocolo as the murderers of the priest and his servant, and described a house in Naples where part of the stolen property had been cached. A search, sure enough, revealed some of the loot taken from Gragnano, but the swarthy woman did not appear again, nor could she be traced. Investigation by the Carabinieri revealed, moreover, that she

bore no resemblance to Irene de Angelis, who was the sister and not the cousin of the ex-convict, and his only relative in Castellamare.

Toward the last of August, 1910, an anonymous letter reached the Vice-Questore of the San Ferdinando police station who had first conducted the investigation in the murder of *'a bella sorrentina.*

The letter declared as follows: A certain lawyer named Fava had told police agent Ippolito that on the evening of the Cuocolo murders he had seen three men descend from a carriage on the road between Naples and Torre del Greco. One of them particularly he remembered well because of a flattened nose *naso camuso.* And when the police agent showed Fava photographs of de Angelis and Amodeo, the lawyer identified them as two of the men he had seen.

Fava and Ippolito were summoned before a magistrate and questioned. Fava, when pressed, would not positively swear that the men he saw descending from the carriage were the originals of the police photographs; nor, when he came to think of it, was he so sure that one of them had a flat nose—still, there was something peculiar about his face. . . . He was somewhat uncertain. . . .

Captain Fabbroni, as the same mysterious, taciturn clerk from Rome, was present at the interrogation. He smiled sardonically and said no word. . . .

Shortly after, our friend Fava was invited to the

villa on Vomero. . . . The Captain employed his most persuasive arts . . . and within a surprisingly short time the *naso camuso* became a sightless eye, and the witness had no difficulty in recognizing Nicola Morra, Corrado Sortino and Mariano di Gennaro as the three men in the carriage. Therefore this attempted coup was turned into a confirmation of that part of Abbatemaggio's confession recounting the carriage trip which the three had taken from Torre del Greco to Naples on the night of the murder.

The Camorra did not give up. During the summer of 1910, with the Great Trial at hand—that monumental struggle between organized society and its outcasts—the police and judiciary of Naples made a final attempt to obstruct justice. Without warning, they caused several of the Carabinieri's most important witnesses to be dragged to court and charged them with crimes from the punishment of which they had long been immune. These men were sentenced by the Naples Assizes as follows: Gennaro Abbatemaggio, five years; Luigi Arena, thirteen years; Nazzareno de Martiri, thirteen years; Carlo Menichello, eight years; Riccardo Valvo, Guiseppe Apice, and Antonio Parlati each six years.

It came very suddenly—this wave of morality on the part of the Questura and Judiciary of the southern metropolis! The Government at Rome, however, was far from deceived. The sentences against these men were all suspended, and they were returned

to the Carabinieri, to be held in readiness for the Great Trial!

Where to hold the trial was a problem. Naples, of course, was out of the question. Rome was thought of, but rejected because of the coming exposition. And finally the little medieval town of Viterbo, in the Etruscan hills just forty-two miles northwest of the Eternal City, was selected as the scene of the greatest criminal trial the world has ever known!

Why Viterbo? The main reasons were its smallness and its isolation. Though on the main highway between Florence and Rome, the town could only be reached from the outside world by a small branch railroad. A more dramatic setting could scarcely have been imagined! For the region of Viterbo had but recently been Brigand-land—those colorful Tuscan hills dreaming under the blue Italian sky, scarcely three hours from Rome! Not fifteen years before, Tiburzi the bandit had strolled into Viterbo, dragged the mayor into the public square, given him two minutes to kneel and pray, and then shot him through the head like a dog. . . . This was but one of the bloody scenes that had taken place in the quaint medieval stronghold, the city, as it has been called, "of handsome fountains and beautiful women!"

Far back, in the thirteenth century, Viterbo had been selected for the Conclave which resulted in the election of Theodore Visconti as Gregory X. It met here in the Bishop's Palace, and lasted two years and

nine months, during which time the small city became a stage for diuturnal violence and bloodshed, among the murdered being the English Prince Henry. The present Trial was expected to rival in length the Conclave of 1271, with this difference: that whereas the angered populace had then removed the roof of the Episcopal Palace to force a decision on the Cardinals, there was now no way, according to Italian legislation, to shorten procedure before the courts. And the wheels of Italian justice move slowly, though eventually they grind exceedingly fine! Witness the four years which it took the Carabinieri to construct their monumental case!

So, one day, early in March, 1911, a fantastic cavalcade approached the hill city. The crowds gathered—these sons of Etruria whose interest was not wholly unprofessional—troops appeared everywhere, cordons of them, holding back the populace. The town took on the aspect of conquered territory. And swiftly the "Black Marias" drew up to the medieval monastery of Gradi, now transformed to a prison, not far from the spot where, in July 1155, Pope Hadrian IV, the Englishman Nicholas Breakspeare, compelled Frederick I, as his vassal, to hold his stirrup!

"Stand back—back—you people!" shouted the Carabinieri. . . . The glossy-black vigilantly guarded vans drew up. The populace gazed saucer-eyed. The Camorrists! Here they were. . . . And as the sun poured down its splendor on the scene,

one might have almost sworn that secret brethren—the mysterious *pali* and *Palomas*—were lurking within the emerald folds of the surrounding hills to whistle their strange signals from one to another!

The vehicles came to a halt. The doors were unbolted and pulled creaking open. . . . Chained two by two, awkwardly, slowly, glaring at the ranks of Carabinieri surrounding them, the prisoners stepped out, thirty-eight Camorrist chieftains besides a large number of suborners and material witnesses! And the populace gasped. How different from their own remembered *banditti*! These were men with the prison pallor upon them—but men of the most reputable appearance, dressed in decent black: white-linened, clean, sober. Most of them had the aspect of successful politicians and well-to-do merchants. A bare half-score appeared musty and moth-eaten . . . and from these the rest seemed to draw in disgust. (Imagine a political "Boss" or mayor bound together with one of his polluted hirelings!)

Now came Erricone, chained to tiny "Peppe the Short." Square-jawed, square-shouldered, grizzly-mustached, he cast about his steady, unconquered eyes. Sorrows he had known since Petrosino arrested him: he had seen his younger brother, the handsome Ciro, die in prison; he had lost Adelina forever; his whole existence had been warped. Yet Erricone remained unbowed. His fixed stare seemed to proclaim: "I am here in chains now, but uncowed—far from it! I may still beat you all—yes—Cara-

binieri, Government, and King! And if I do——!"

All at once, as his eyes fell upon a group of journalists, standing inside the cordon of troops, the former chief thrust up his shackled hands. The chains jingled and glittered in the sunshine. "Innocent!" exclaimed Erricone. He said no more—merely, "innocent!" And all the other prisoners, even those still locked within the hollow-echoing vans, took up the cry. . . . "Innocent! Innocent!" rang tumultuously around the massive, sun-drenched monastery!

CHAPTER 2

March 11, 1911 broke clear and shifted its light by degrees to a dominant angle over the Etruscan hill city. In the *Piazza della Rocca*, right opposite Vignola's famous fountain over whose petals the dawn hovered mist-like, rose, dark against the eastern heaven, the vast, baroque church of the Scalzi (Barefooted). And since early morning, the townsfolk had been gathering in the square. For this ancient sanctuary now edged with broadening sunshine, had been transformed into a Court of Assize. In here the dreaded Camorrists were to be tried!

The ponderous bronze doors of the Court were pushed slowly open. The crowd gaped at the glaring view revealed. The cavernous inside of the church had been entirely whitewashed and, with bars of sunshine aslant from tall luminous windows, produced a striking effect. Into this glowing interior entered populace, witnesses, lawyers—a dark creeping blanket—interspersed with omnipresent glittering Carabinieri.

Once within, the crowd literally gasped in astonishment, not unmingled with an instinctive blood-leap of dread. What was this strange, monstrous structure to the right?

What?

The church was built in the form of a cross. Straight ahead, in the rotunda formerly occupied by the High Altar, now squatted a broad judicial bench covered with green velvet. Over the whitewashed arch bulged angels in high relief, once gilded, pouring rills of rosebuds out of plaything urns; and a cluster of gaping heads, grotesques, effigies of evil, their blinded stony eyeballs straining forth through the white paint. In the left transept had been located the jury box, and above it, in the former organ loft, a gallery for the press. But it was the right transept toward which the populace stared open-mouthed. For there, within the glowing white hollow, towered a monstrous cage of steel, massive, black, purgatorial—a veritable aviary for dark vultures of crime! In there the accused chieftains of the Camorra—thirty-eight of them—were to be thrust and guarded, every second of the time by sharp-eyed Carabinieri! The crowd shuddered. Nothing could have brought home with greater force the perils which still generated out of the mysterious depths of the Camorra! And those among them who knew must have grinned at the thought that this terrible cage had been located right over the tomb of the famous painter, Lorenzo da Viterbo, whose celebrated picture, the "Marriage of the Virgin," is considered one of the greatest masterpieces of the pre-Raphaelite epoch!

Gazing upward, the eye met something still more

insinuating. For the rotunda itself was very lofty, and in order that the voice might not be lost, a large white awning had been drawn across the base of the dome. This cloth concealed from view the large golden letters of an inscription which, according to statute, must be displayed in every Italian court: "Law equal for all!"

The nave was already crowded. There were almost a thousand witnesses—over three hundred against the prisoners and some six hundred for them. Of the latter, which included every deputy of Campania summoned by Erricone in his defense, the judges had only agreed to allow the evidence of about half, including a merchant from London and eight Frenchmen. Among the legal talent arrayed for the Camorrists were numerous famous criminal lawyers from Naples, notably the advocates Alessandro Lioy and Frederico Maresca who, before the trial was over, might find themselves enmeshed in the net the strands of which they were so industriously striving to break.

Now came excited cries from the outside. The prisoners were arriving! Down the crowded streets rumbled the vans. One by one they paused at the door. Through a double line of soldiers, prisoners stepped in, paired together, their chains clanking. Up to the huge cage they were escorted. Unshackled there, they were thrust within. . . . Darkly they sat, these former Men of Silence, behind the black

bars, in four rows, one above the other. Here was Erricone, defiant, burning-eyed; Rapi, eyebrows raised with an air of perpetual astonishment, edging away in disgust from the old epileptic Bartolozzi, who slumped next to him, who should have been gibbering in a mad-house; Ibello, long-faced, dangerous-looking, like a pirate just dead, cut down from a medieval gibbet; Morra, the one-eyed . . . and Maria Stendardo who had come limping up the aisle. . . . Could this be she? Maria the "Beauty"? What a horror four years of prison had made of her! Here she sat, the only woman in the cage, hands folded in her lap, white and fat as a cereus, her eyes shining with a humid appeal for mercy, silent as ever, save for an occasional sigh which heaved across her baggy bosom. This white-skinned, bloated creature, this flaccid carcass of woe—could this have been the Madonna-like girl who was her mother's jealous care down by the waterfront of Naples?

All at once a snarl escaped from the monstrous cage, a snarl of impotent hatred, as of trapped beasts. Even Maria's lips curled up and showed their teeth still precious-white. All eyes were directed toward the western entrance of the church. . . . The Traitor!

Unchained, surrounded by Carabinieri, Abbatemaggio was being led up the central aisle. And as he approached, there swelled out of the cage a roar

of famished wolves, of hate-hunger, a roar out of which pealed a few clear epithets: "Traitor! *Nfamo*! Murderer of the Innocent! Judas!"

Abbatemaggio grinned sardonically and made a pretty gesture as he flicked an imaginary speck from his immaculately white cuff.

To one side and a little in front of the huge cage stood a much smaller one. Within this Abbatemaggio was locked. He sat down gracefully, smiling askance at the infuriated Camorrists. . . . Then he crossed his legs and inspected a patent-leather shoe and a crimson sock. He too was all in black, save for his crimson socks and a scarlet tie. . . . He shot out his big, marble-white cuffs and scanned them. . . . Then he twirled his upturned, Kaiserish mustache and smiled . . . nothing seemed to disturb him . . . the Traitor smiled. . . . From the cage shot insults. He smiled. Padre Vitozzi, who had been allowed to sit in front of the aviary, crossed himself and murmured, "*Maledictus homo qui perseverat in falso testimonio*!" The informer smiled. But his black, beady eyes flashed maliciously and the veins of his neck were swollen. A close observer could have detected the strenuous intensity which quivered under that debonair exterior. Self-possessed indeed was this little man, this erstwhile stable boy! Let us look him over—for he is well worth it. The four years in prison—he too had been safely held under lock and key—had changed Gennarino altogether. His cleverness and keen, razor-edged wit had come

to the fore. He had read a good deal; he had acquired considerable knowledge. Among other things he had learned to assume airs of almost effeminate prettiness. Even now, he sparkled with vanity. He seemed proud to have a cage all to himself, to feel himself the cynosure of all eyes. Yet this was merely a surface pose, a smiling mask held over his crafty soul. The dissimulation was perfect, though. And as the sharp-featured lawyers for the defense leaned forward to transfix him with their glare, one might easily have thought: "Why, they'll make a fool out of this little creature! Why, they'll 'eat him alive!' "

But did they? We'll see.

The judges were somewhat late for this first session. Finally they entered from the baptistry door. Commendatore Bianchi, president of the court, in flowing black robe with gilt galloons, approached austerely and took his place on the bench. At his either hand sat the assistant judges or assessors. Near him also hovered the Public Prosecutor, Santoro, bearded, stern, clothed in a long gown of flaming red. (In Italy they clothed hangmen, *procuratori* and Cardinals in crimson!) The lawyers sat up at attention. . . . Something of the hubbub had subsided. . . . And all the while Abbatemaggio sat motionless, grinning occasionally to one side at the mammoth cage.

The jury were being chosen. Fenced off in a part of the nave sat a crowd of gloomy, sombre-visaged

men. Actually they appeared far more unhappy than the prisoners. For they were confronted by a year, perhaps two, of service—penned in court by day, locked in a solitary hotel by night, watched continuously—for a ridiculously small pay. It was far from being a cheerful prospect. One by one, they were summoned up to the jury box and questioned. Some were rejected and went away, heaving a sigh of relief—others were chosen and remained in their seats, motionless, immediately assuming an expression of resignation, like martyrs shown calmly roasting amid the flames and lilies of a primitive chapel window.

There were to be twenty-four jurors: twelve as active members, and twelve as alternates to take their places in emergency, thus obviating possible delays to the trial.

The hours dragged on. Abbatemaggio sat in his little cage, still motionless as a statue. Vitozzi slouched in his chair, head leaning against the stone base of the Camorrist aviary. As the sun's rays penetrated the windows at a slant from the west and illumined the canvas overhead like a block of marble, one of the defense lawyers edged over to the priest and asked, "How are you feeling, Father?" To which Don Ciro replied, "Very badly—very, very badly. . . . Blessed be the will of the Lord! Evidently we mortals must go through Purgatory during this life!"

The jury box was gradually being filled. Every-

thing was proceeding quietly. It hardly seemed possible that a trial of such import was being initiated. But all this was simply the proverbial calm before the tempest. Looking over the calm assemblage, one could hardly have foreseen the wild scenes, the amazing outbursts which were soon to take place within the whitewashed church!

Later in the day, just before court adjourned, the accused were seen to be whispering together and then with their lawyers. There were excited gestures. An argument seemed to have started up. Evidently all was not very harmonious within the madornal cage of crime. From various sides came the question: What was the trouble? The Carabinieri who stood massed on watch around the court, gripped their weapons tightly. What did the conference mean? The fiery discussion, it was learned, waxed over lottery numbers. Lawyers and prisoners all expected to gamble on the omens of this first day. The numbers 4, 20, and 50 were especially favored: 4 being the number of jurymen still lacking, 50 those called altogether, and 20 those who had been chosen!

CHAPTER 3

Initial action proceeded with a rapid pace. The rules of common law do not prevail in Italy. But the rights of both accused and accuser, based on Roman and Napoleonic codes, are strictly observed. The accused is first examined by the Judge, and then confronted face to face with his denouncer. He is allowed to defend himself, not only through his own testimony and that of witnesses, but by his powers of eloquence and his forensic ability. The President of the Court takes an active part in the arguments, being somewhat like the chairman of a debating society, and does his utmost to allow each side a fair show.

Thus it was that reports came out of Viterbo giving one the impression that indescribable confusion—almost Pandemonium—prevailed within the degraded church, that prisoners, witnesses, lawyers wrangled, made speeches and interrupted proceedings almost at will. But this was true only on the surface. Beneath poured the inexorable tide of justice—of a government determined not only to achieve the conviction of the Cuocolo assassins, but to annihilate, once and for all, the dread Honorable Society of the Camorra!

The prisoners were first examined by the Judge

and then confronted by their accusers. The examinations proceeded apace. Sortino, with his wounded finger; meagre Salvi, who burst into tears and whined, "Signor President, look at me. Isn't it enough to *see* me to understand the impossibility of strong and dreaded Camorrists employing a *thing like me* to murder an able-bodied woman? Look at me, Signor!"; Morra, who caused a laugh by declaring that the Camorra only existed on the Island of Favignana (one of the prison islands); de Matteo, with chalky face and faded eyes, who denied everything about everything; Cerrato; tall di Gennaro; Ibello, oblong featured and dangerous looking as ever, even when his face was flattened in a lugubrious expression of innocence; and Arena, the hardened old thief, who had spent forty of his forty-eight years either in prison or under police surveillance! All of them denied everything. What? They murder the Cuocolos? And who were these Cuocolos? One or two had, indeed, known the dead couple by sight. But as for killing them—impossible!

Denials—denials—denials—It was nothing but the all-governing *Omertà*! Speeches were intoned—stormy, catapultic outbursts—for Neapolitans are born tragedians. There were scores of wild scenes. But the black fire of hatred and tragedy flared up with its most baleful splendor, when Don Ciro Vitozzi was called to the stand.

He and two other suborners had been allowed to sit in front of the huge cage.

"Call Vitozzi!"

The Padre shivered. His dark eyes poured flame from behind their iron-rimmed glasses. A hush spread over the court. Motionless too were the Camorrists in their tragic aviary. . . . Slowly Don Ciro arose and stood faltering in his black gown. His face was very pale, as if with fever; his brow seemed humid. . . . Now he hobbled up to the platform in front of the Judicial bar. The prosecutor in his flaming red stirred uncertainly at the other end of the marble platform (this platform had been the sanctuary of the ancient church). Judge Bianchi nodded severely.

And in a clear, bell-like voice—strangely clear, coming as it did out of such a shaken form, Don Ciro spoke:

"Excellency! Gentlemen of the jury! Behold me—I am a priest—a priest honored and esteemed by the highest political authorities and by the most noble families of Naples! Never have I appeared before a penal magistrate. Never has there been a blot on my character. And now—look at me, thrust here before you, broken by the persecutions of wanton enemies, bowed down, with death lodged firmly within my frame! I am accused in a most fantastic manner. What are these charges? What proofs are there against me? I shall tell you. These charges proceed from a mass of tangled lies, from perjury, from words that have been bought by my enemies! That is all they have against me! That is all the

charge they can bring against me! Oh, then indeed does the soul of the priest—yes, of the pious priest—protest disdainfully against such a perversion of justice! Mark this well. Don Ciro Vitozzi is innocent! Innocent! And the lies which have wounded him—which are wounding those unfortunates in that cage—are nothing but nightmare thoughts, nothing but mental aberrations of hell-possessed enemies!"

A murmur ran through the vast building. Don Ciro stood with his head held high, his face still deathly pale.

And now in a low monotone, the President of the Court read the charge against him: that of calumny. Under its black robes the priest's body seemed to jump. Then, striding forward, Don Ciro bore down upon him, shouting:

"I a calumniator! I am a martyr, an innocent man, a victim! Priest, confessor, preacher—I am an innocent victim of hatred! For five years I have lain in your prisons, mocked at, defiled, tortured! . . ." And here, with an impulsive motion, he turned to thrust out his arms toward those in the cage. . . . "Oh, my poor children, my poor hurt children, I offer my sufferings to you and to all those poor tortured souls in Purgatory!"

Erricone, whose brother Ciro had died at his side in prison, burst out into loud lamentation—and in a moment all the prisoners were wailing, moaning, sobbing, writhing their arms,—all of them, even the most hardened of them, even Ibello, the grim; even

Bartelozzi, the gibbering epileptic; even the mongoloid, yellowish old thief Arena; even the she-Camorrist, the poor "Beauty" of Naples, now pale and bloated, thrusting fat fingers into her golden hair. All, all wailed in a chorus of anguish—like children who did not understand why they were being punished. It was a scene from some medieval tragedy, remote, grotesque, far-off, now being enacted in black and crimson within the walls of the degraded church!

They came to the evidence. There were letters from scores of criminals—and—shocking to relate—lewd photographs! Don Ciro drew up straight. His robe fell down in sombre grooves. How was he to blame? The compromising pictures had been planted in his desk after his arrest. He named the man who had put them there. He knew. Yes, he knew!

Deliberately, while Don Ciro spoke, the Judge opened a cardboard box—an old and dingy box—and drawing out a long, thin lock of faded hair, dangled it out toward the priest's white face.

"What girl gave you this? he demanded sternly. . . .

"Infamy! Infamy!" yelled the priest. His throat chords were swollen out; he seemed to be swallowing air—drowning with air—as he uttered his words. . . . "That is my mother's hair—*i capelli della mia mamma adorata*! They were gray when I cut them from her dear head the night she died. Look at them—there are streaks of gray in them, are there

not? Are there not? That was long ago. There was an inscription on the box. Where is it? Who took it off? Who suppressed it? You did! . . . Infamous!"

The big black cage groaned. . . .

And Vitozzi: "They were stolen from me—cruelty! Cruelty! *Si puo imaginare una piu crudele profanazione?* Nothing, nothing was respected!" The caged men wailed; Rapi nodded, his face set in a silly grin and his eyes filled with tears. . . .

And the priest, slapping hands of anguish against his face, digging fingernails into his cheeks: "What I have suffered! What I suffer now! How can I find the strength to endure it? Where, in the regions between heaven and the abyss shall I find the power to bear it any longer. I can no more—*Nonne posso piu. . . .*"

There was a tumult, a medley of cries . . . lawyers running right and left . . . prisoners howling . . . spectators murmuring and stirring uneasily . . . the Carabinieri trying to preserve order . . . and finally Court had to be adjourned. But this proved to be merely a lull in the tempest. The throbbing pulses of the trial had been stirred. Thereafter every day was a battle, every day a roaring drama. Now came the confrontation between Don Ciro Vitozzi and Abbatemaggio! And that epic scene, wholly typical of the Great Trial, that quenchless hatred of the Priest and the Cynic, was worth going half-seas-over to behold!

Don Ciro stood up by his chair and described their first meeting to the Court:

"I had never seen him before until the Carabinieri brought us face to face. He was dressed with elegance—a light summer suit, yellow boots, a silk shirt, a new Panama hat. He said he knew me well, that he had met me with Alfano and the other prisoners, that he knew of certain illegal dealings on my part. I said: 'My brother, think again; this is false—false. What you are saying is serious—it is not a matter for jesting. It may mean life or death.' And the perjured man—that creature lolling there is his little cage—laughed to my face. Then I said: 'Let him swear on the ashes of his father whom he says he loved, and when he has sworn and told the truth, I will embrace him and pray for him, as God has bidden us to pray for those who persecute us and say all manner of evil about us!' The perjured man would not take that oath!"

Again the cage was in tumult. Glaring down at Abbatemaggio, the Camorrists shouted, "Assassin! Villain! Son of Judas!"

Drawing himself up, smoothing his black gown, the priest also wheeled toward Abbatemaggio. With an expression of supreme annoyance, the informer lounged listlessly back in his small cage. Don Ciro thrust out a black-sleeved arm, pointing a sharp forefinger at him. "Yes, and now I say to him that if he continues to lie and if Saint Janarius whose name he bears does not touch his black heart, I my-

self shall lay the *Curse* upon him! Aye, I shall curse him!" And raising his voice to a crystal clearness, the priest cried, "I shall say to him: 'Abbatemaggio! in the name of the Holy Trinity, I lay the *Curse* upon you: on you and all your descendents to the last generation!' "

Back in the deep white cavern of the nave the witnesses and crowding populace shuddered. Many crossed themselves. Within the cage all faces were turned down glistening-eyed at the informer, as though awaiting the miracle. Across this sudden hush was heard a voice from out the green, velvety shadows of the Judicial bar: "Abbatemaggio!"

All unperturbed, the former coachman stood up. He was smartly dressed and smiling—a dapper little fellow, with suit well-pressed, patent-leather shoes gleaming immaculately under crimson socks, hair oiled and pomaded and mustache twisted upward.

A Carabiniere unlocked the cage. And treading lightly, almost on tiptoes, Abbatemaggio sauntered up toward the marble platform before the judicial bench. In passing, his right elbow grazed Don Ciro's breast. The priest shrank back. "What a stink of musk!" he exclaimed . . . and from the cage the prisoners snarled, "Ugh! perfumed assassin!"

Abbatemaggio had taken his place on the platform. Lightly now, bending his fingers in pretty gestures, the informer affirmed his truthfulness. With a delicate smile, he lisped: "It is the priest who lies—Oh, shocking for a priest to lie—a holy man!"

Don Ciro's mouth gaped wide with anger. He stood motionless as though carved out of granite. The judge turned toward one of the court clerks and nodded. . . . Again came the voice:

"Vitozzi!"

"Yes, it is the priest who lies—"

But the Padre had heard the summons. He straightened himself. A moment since he had appeared about to collapse. But now, with a tremulous head shake, he walked the few paces from his chair up to the marble steps. . . . Sternly he climbed them. Now he stood on the platform, staring across at Abbatemaggio who, without moving an eye-lash, confronted him from the opposite end. With eyes blazing from behind their iron-rimmed glasses, Don Ciro took several long strides toward the informer, as though intending to walk right into him. But, a few feet away, he came to an abrupt stop. Abbatemaggio remained as before staring forth like a wax doll.

Questioned by the Judge, Abbatemaggio told his story. He had been at the corner of the Via Nardones on the morning after the murder. At a stand sat Erricone having his shoes shined. And the graveyard priest came up.

With an impulsive gesture, Don Ciro slapped a hand against his breast as though to say, "Me—can it be possible that you mean me?"

The informer affirmed: "Yes; and the priest repeated several times that the whole bunch of them

should return to Torre del Greco, and that they had better go in the company of jolly girls—if possible with the fiancées of both the brothers 'Erricone'. Then the picnic would make a more brilliant show, and cause less suspicion on the part of the local police. And then Don Ciro went away in the company of that big fellow there, Desiderio."

Wrath made the priest's face livid. It appeared for a moment that he would blurt out words of wild denial. But the next instant, with a most incredible change, his face assumed an expression of serenity. His long, silky lashes lowered over eyes that shone benign and compassionate. And from his lips came a voice, soft, velvety, almost woman-like:

"Brother, tell the truth! Brother, it is not too late. After all these fantasies, all these wanton tales—tell the truth! I forgive you for all the harm you have done me, for all the hurt you have done those unfortunates there. But, brother, before it is too late, tell the truth!" To all this pleading the informer remained as motionless as before. Don Ciro's piercing mind must have read into his thoughts. Instantly the Padre's eyes blazed. From his pocket he pulled a silver crucifix. Thrusting it to within a few inches of the other's nose, he exclaimed, "Then swear! swear by this crucifix, this simulacrum of our Lord, that what you have just been saying, is not a lie!"

All at once Abbatemaggio's face puckered up. His prettiness, his pose, all fell away from him, like

a thin coating of brittle ice clattering in pieces, and the stable-boy showed forth in all his vulgarity. He growled in Neapolitan: "*Zi' pre' nun fa 'o zetiello*!" ("Say old priest, don't act the he-spinster!", meaning, "don't play the innocent"). And then realizing the rift in his pose, he added, in Tuscan, "Why, you offer me the crucifix—and you and your kind have ever crushed the Saviour under your feet!" Thereupon he proceeded to counteract the priest's arguments and passionate denials. Like a keen lance, his wit thrust into every vulnerable part of his opponent's phrases. (His eyes, too, were like black blades). Sharply, he spoke on. . . . No longer was the priest defiant, no longer was he a force to call down the fires of heaven on the head of the informer. . . . He was now only a weak old fellow, feeble from four years of chains, prison, hospital, one who was suffering grievously from angina pectoris, in whose frame death was firmly lodged!

It was with lowered head that Don Ciro hobbled down from his confrontation with his accuser.

CHAPTER 4

Rapi versus Abbatemaggio! The court was packed. Rumors had coursed Viterbo. Something was about to be sprung on the informer, something that would change the trial's entire aspect!

Judge Bianchi proved to be in fighting feather that morning. The jurors were much excited at the publication by a newspaper of an interview with a celebrated soothsayer, predicting that a bearded juryman would die during the trial. (Six of them wore beards.) It was the thirty-fifth court day, and proceedings still appeared in the incipient stage. The jurors' release was no more imminent than that of the Camorrists.

Rapi, attired according to the most correct Bond Street fashion, in dark gray suit, was conducted up to the platform. There he made a courteous bow to the President of the court, and with his sonorous baritone voice, a voice that somehow put one in mind of a university lecturer, said: "Your Excellency, I am at your disposal!"

Abbatemaggio strolled up to the stand. He launched right into his terrible accusations. Briefly he mentioned a series of robberies, and concluded, "You, Rapi, were nothing but a fence, in spite of all

your fine show—nothing but a receiver of stolen goods. You disposed of the most valuable jewels stolen in these robberies by the Camorrist gangs!"

Rapi was almost speechless, almost choking with rage. He could only stammer: "Liar, imbecile, assassin, spulatore—"

"Oh, oh, that's not a nice way for a professor of philosophy to talk!" sneered Abbatemaggio; and the judges in black and gold laughed; the prisoners laughed; even the jury came out of their shell of gloom and chortled.

The "Professor" realized all at once that *he* was the butt of their derision.

Abbatemaggio continued: with sudden leaps, his words tore down into the dark depths of the Cuocolo horror. He told how he overheard Rapi munch threats against Cuocolo. How Erricone, after the banquet, had determined to have old de Matteo handle the material execution of the crime and had sent him, Abbatemaggio, to call the man. On his return he found Rapi in close conference with the "big boss." He heard Rapi insist that, as long as they were going to have one execution, they might as well have two. It would be safer. The Professor appeared to entertain keen personal hatred for la Cutinelli . . . and so on, to the crime and Rapi's gift of 1000 lire for the murderers.

Rapi retorted heatedly: "But how is all this. How is it that Abbatemaggio waited for two years to go by before leaping forth with these silly accusations

against me? Why didn't he sing out from the beginning? Why not then, when he made that infamous 'confession' of lies? Why, Abbatemaggio—look at me in the face—why didn't you accuse me, innocent, from the beginning?"

And Abbatemaggio, "Because I was afraid that you would have had me served the way Pasquino was."

"Ridiculous! That crime was duly investigated—and my name cleared of all connection with it!"

The informer sneered. Rapi continued: "But, my boy, what fear could you have had of me? You were not afraid to accuse people—I hope they will pardon me—people like Morra, Cerrato, Sortino . . . and of me you profess to be afraid—afraid of Professor Rapi! But this is puerile, to say the least!"

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"And what are these other lies? Do you think that I would let myself be overheard in intimate colloquies by an irresponsible stable creature—*un mozzo di stalla*?"

Again the informer shrugged his shoulders and went on: he described some of the valuables said to have been acquired by Rapi as fence. There was, among other items, on ornamental bronze clock stolen from the Baron d'Amato, for which the "Professor" paid 400 lire.

Rapi interrupted: "But, my boy! You accuse me of buying a clock which could hardly have been worth

more than 100 lire, and of paying 400 for it! Surely I must have conducted a most generous 'fence'! Don't you think so?"

Glumly, the other mumbled, "That's your own affair."

"And my dear, you say that I gave Arena 100 lire to buy burglar's tools with in June 1902. How is that, when I can absolutely prove my sojourn in London during the summer of 1902?"

Ignoring this, Abbatemaggio went on. Finally, unable to bear it any longer, Rapi blurted: "But I do not know you, Abbatemaggio!"

"Too bad. Because I know you well. I was introduced to you by Arena in Piazza Plebiscito."

"I know neither you nor Arena! What are you driving at? What causes you to say such lies?"

"The cause of truth, old Professor!"

Instantly as though at a given signal both of them leaped toward one another, shouting. In a moment they would have gripped one another's throat—the immaculately arrayed professor and his sharp little denouncer. The court, unable to restrain them, called for the Carabinieri. Immediately five soldiers leaped to the platform and separated the infuriated opponents. Court was adjourned amid tumult . . . all the caged men were howling. . . .

Erricone's confrontation with Abbatemaggio came on the thirty-seventh day. First he was examined by the court. The circulation of the report that the

chief Camorrist was to be interrogated added a fresh interest to the proceedings. The president was besieged for tickets and the court was jammed long before the opening hour.

By his face and attitude, as he descended in chains from the prison van, Erricone showed nothing indicating that he felt any emotion at this critical moment. Only the long scar crossing his cheek had become redder than usual. As he passed the front of the cage, Father Vitozzi stood up and said paternally, "My son, I have prayed all night that you may succeed and prove your innocence."

Alfano smiled gently.

Court opened. Judge Bianchi asked Erricone to leave the cage and to say all he desired in his defence. The interest grew most tense and the silence breathless. . . .

Erricone stood before the court in a natural attitude, without theatricality or excessive humility. The President read the charges against him: that of murder and of criminal association—*associazione a delinquere.*

The Camorrist replied. His voice was not strong, but penetrating. As he went on he became heated and abandoned himself with incandescent fervor to an impromptu oration, in which he showed consummate ability and acumen rising to really supreme oratorical levels. At the moment when he grew most excited, his whole person became transfigured. A

stocky, average-sized man a moment before, he turned into a savage tiger, looming on tiptoes, ready to spring. . . .

"It is a myth," he declared, "that I have been a head of the Camorra! I was neither head nor tail—as I have never been a Camorrist! How then could I have ordered 'an execution' of Gennaro Cuocolo?"

He admitted that as a youth he was arrogant and quarrelsome, even going to excesses. "But," he remarked, "no youth of my class is otherwise in Naples. They are all quarrelsome, violent, quick in coming to blows. One would have to be a paralytic saint in order not to react in similar fashion." And why was he here? Two reasons: first, Abbatemaggio! And second, the lawless press, ever hungering for sensations! Take the newspaper Il Mattino, with its insane passion for sensationalism. Why were they hounding him? For what reason had their staff assumed a more heinous enmity toward him than even the Carabinieri or their puppet Abbatemaggio? One incident, which he regretted, might explain a little of this animosity. He said: "All my nerves, blood, and flesh rebelled when a member of the staff of that newspaper approached me; and I couldn't help spitting in his face! But was that sufficient reason for them to hound me like this? I can't believe so. The reason is nothing but the cannibalism in their hearts! The cannibalism!"

At this point Erricone's indignation reached the highest pitch. He exclaimed in a voice all tremulous

with emotion: "Signor President, to call us murderers is cannibalism! no one has the right to call us that now, or even confessed murderers—not until the verdict of the gentlemen Jurors is pronounced! But why do they do this? Why do they stir up all voices, all hearts against us? Why?"

The President urged Erricone to be calm. Erricone, sobbing, replied:

"I cannot stand it any longer. I have suffered four years of persecution and martyrdom. I have constantly before my eyes the sight of my brother dying in prison. I have constantly in my ears his laments when in the cell next to mine he went through the agony of death! Signor President, he was young, handsome, beautiful as a god, and died innocent!"

This outburst created a thrill that tore electrically through the cavernous white church. Ibello burst into loud sobs and leaned his long, clay-colored head against the thick bars of the cage, mouth open, gulping his sobs . . . he looked like a Purgatorial effigy lurking in a corner of a ghostly tomb; Maria the beauty slapped plump white hands against her face and shook fitfully; Morra, Sortino and the others joined in the wailing chorus . . . again it seemed like a medieval tragedy, grotesque, primitive, remote. . . .

But calmness came over Erricone. The pause was short. He now stared keenly at the judges. He was again master of himself. And with able, pene-

trating argument, he tried to demolish the evidence of Abbatemaggio. Why that informer, he said, was nothing but a poor youth whom he had occasionally helped and employed as a stable-boy! "And to think of the silly tales that are bandied around here; that Camorrists confided their secrets to this stable raggamuffin—it is simply absurd! Most of us considered Abbatemaggio as sort of half-hearted, harmless stool-pigeon. Personally I did not care what he was, having nothing to fear." Quickly, he pointed out what he claimed were absurdities in the other's story. . . . He told of the gay return from Torre del Greco on that fateful June night—the gathering of friends at the station to say farewell—Ibello buying drinks . . . and he shouted, "Even if we were wild animals, is it possible to act like this after murdering a man and while getting ready to murder his wife? This is savagery which only filthy minds like that stable-creature's can conceive!"

Abbatemaggio, in his little cage, grinned sarcastically. . . .

The Carabinieri also smiled. Their turn was coming.

Meanwhile the judge had asked: Why did Erricone run away to America?

An answer was forthcoming: Alfano had been tacitly advised to do so by his lawyer. "He told me, 'You will of course be freed after a long trial, being innocent. But you may have to stay five years in jail before being let go. These things proceed very

slowly.' Five years! Five eternities! Thereupon I determined. The best course was to flee!"

The confrontation between Erricone and Abbattemaggio lasted three trial days. For three glittering days they stood facing one another across the white marble of the former altar: foes worthy of each other's mettle, battling every inch of the way, knocking down and demolishing one another's arguments till confusion filled the minds of everyone and not a witness of this terrific struggle could have said which of the two was lying nor when.

Erricone began, with a curt bow to the Judges: "I shall be calm. I have faith in the ultimate triumph of truth. Abbatemaggio will be destined to tear down with his own hands the edifice of perjury which he has erected against us! We have faith in your impartiality, Excellency and Gentlemen of the Jury. And we will fish the lies out of this creature's throat one by one!"

Abbatemaggio's voice appeared to come through muffling velvet. He was commanded to speak. And fixing his eyes on the powerful Camorrist, he repeated his lengthy accusations. He told of the friendship which existed between him and Alfano. How that latter "Honored" him with his faith and confidence and had employed him on several personal missions. And also Rapi knew him as a hireling who could be trusted.

"You lie!" interrupted Alfano.

"I am not lying. This is gospel truth!" Where-

upon Abbatemaggio returned to his narrative. His frequent meetings with Erricone, the "Cattle Driver" and the other habitués of Caffe Fortunio. He repeated the words of wrath which Erricone pronounced when he heard of the letter sent by Arena to de Marinis. He told of the heated colloquy which followed. Of the various meetings at some of which he even saw Professor Rapi participate. And finally of the errand on which Erricone sent him, namely, that of summoning de Mateo, in order that the latter might receive orders for "unravelling a skein."

Impetuously Erricone retorted: "What are you talking about? How could I have trusted you, a beardless boy, in such a delicate matter—I who am alleged to be an elder Camorrist, in fact, the leader, the Generalissimo of the entire Camorra! But you are an ingenuous youngster! Why I hardly knew you. . . ."

"Is that so? Too bad, for I've known you intimately a long while."

"Only a month—that is, Gentlemen of the Jury, only a month before that fatal June!"

"Go on! I can prove that I knew you long before that." With which Abbatemaggio proceeded to do so, giving scores of dates, scores of facts which seemed to flow out of his phenomenal memory. Erricone was exasperated. He rushed off on another track. He sought to show that Abbatemaggio had always been a stool-pigeon, had always been a confidant of the local police. The informer denied these accusations

vehemently. The passionate parrying and thrusting of arguments between the two had reached a most spirited turn when a howl from the cage interrupted them. Bartilozzi, the epileptic had sprung to his feet. Swaying, face-distorted, writhing his claw-like fingers, he shrilled: "But who can have faith in you? Who can believe you? Dirty Dog! You led your own sister into prostitution in order to live on her shame!"

Abbatemaggio turned pale. A solid roar filled the court. Above it shrilled the high-pitched voice of the epileptic: "Yes! Yes! Yes! you've lived for years on the shoulders of your sister Assunta!"

To this all the other Camorrists added full-throated cries. The informer tried to retort with some insults, but his voice was completely drowned in the torrent of sound. Within the cage all faces purple with rage, were turned in grotesque postures; and from their opened mouths wild distorted words emerged like the hopelessly damned souls that medieval illuminations show twisting out of the jaws of Tubal-Cain. "Gutter bird!" "Around Porta Capuana!" "Assunta!" "Everybody knows her!" and other vituperations, horrible, monstrous, mangled, Neapolitan. . . .

The prosecutor stood up in a flash of red. He tried to say something but was unheard. . . . The Carabinieri tried to silence the men . . . and finally, in anger, Judge Bianchi ordered court adjourned.

The next two days saw only a repetition of the

heinous wrangling. Erricone was now heated and fiery. With impetuous words he swept away all arguments, all impediments. "This creature is an ass!" he yelled, pointing at Abbatemaggio, "He is as much a Camorrist as I am King! In order to be named Camorrist one must prove his courage in deed and not with chatter . . . one must have bared his breast to an opponent's steel—and not merely once —like this!" Saying which, Erricone tore open his jacket and slapped a hand on the broad chest. Abbatemaggio trembled, his mobile black eyes glancing around nervously. And the Camorrist leader, raising his voice, showered his opponent with the most vivid and vulgar epithets, adding to these fiery threats. . . .

Abbatemaggio remained very pale. He seemed to realize the fact that death lurked for him once he emerged from the sheltering power of the Carabinieri.

Later on they came to the moneys which Abbatemaggio alleged had been given him. Erricone snarled: "What? *I* give *you* money for silence? No sir! The Camorra does not know of any cash price for silence. The Camorra obtains silence by giving a rat four blows of a dagger!"

But these outbursts did the Camorrist no good. One by one, like a boy knocking apples from a tree, Abbatemaggio rebutted his objections with unusual cleverness and malice. It was easy to see how the wind was blowing. Erricone had found his match!

CHAPTER 5

Each confrontation, each examination was similarly a scene of passion, scores of them reaching the most amazing heights of tragedy and melodrama—for Neapolitans are naturally a melodramatic people. Here there were consummate actors: Camorrists and Carabinieri, with priest, professor, traitor and a veritable and scandalous heroine of love! In daily rote, each victim of fate was taken from the great cage, led to the marble platform in front of the green-hung table, and invited to tell his story. Invariably he did it with great histrionic effect, sometimes with a passionate sense of the pathos of his situation, and with an extraordinary skill in avoiding any admission which might compromise his companions in duress. Often it was obvious that the man lied. All denied being Camorrists. All denied having had criminal antecedents. The tale was always the same: they were innocent men who had already suffered more than four years of imprisonment owing to a base conspiracy on the part of the Carabinieri.

When, however, their records were revealed in court, one found it hard to feel much sympathy for them, even supposing they were innocent of this

latest crime. Corrado Sortino, for instance, who had the least black record behind him, should never have been at liberty at all. He only kicked a young girl to death in revolting circumstances . . . and other outrages there were, monstrous, blood-curdling. . . .

What a queer psychology of crime was revealed! What stung these Camorrists to the quick—these thieves, blackmailers, whiteslave traders, kidnappers, body-snatchers—was that their wives, sisters or sweethearts were not wholly immaculate. Once President Bianchi merely intimated that Maria the "Beauty's" life had not been stainless, and the whole cage bellowed in protest. And the fair fat woman burst into bitter tears, moaning, "That this should be said of me!" while Morra, the paramour (who was a white slaver par excellence) roared with insulted rage!

For days following the battle with Erricone, Abbatemaggio acted strangely. Previously, in his dapper, confident way, he had fenced with his former companions, always smiling, always master of himself. Now, however, he was hysterical, sobbing fitfully at times for no apparent reason, shifting from outbursts of tears to screaming fits, shrilling words at the top of his voice while opposing the men he had betrayed. What was the reason? The insulting talk about his sister—that uproar precipitated by the epileptic Bartilozzi! Blatantly Abbatemaggio had admitted to being a thief, black-mailer, stool-pigeon and what not . . . but now he broke down in

a welter of shame and revolt! They had said that his sister was not spotless! Oh the horror of it!

And their worship of their dead relatives—One had but to mention "mother" and a whole chorus of lamentation would ensue, led by Rapi and the priest! "Brother" would cause an instant breakdown on the part of the otherwise marmoreal Erricone. What a weird scene there was when Esposito came to the bar. He had been a waiter in the Caffe Fortunio where the chiefs foregathered: a white-haired fellow: an old time Camorrist. His criminal youth had left its marks on him. His face was laced and puckered with black scars; an eye had been gouged out and in its place glared a ball of glass. Hideous, abhorrent as a nightmare, was the face revealed under its white thatch meanwhile he peered at the Judge. . . .

The charge was read against him. He had, among other things, fled and remained in hiding when the Carabinieri went around arresting the Camorrist chieftains.

"I hid myself, yes! Not because I was guilty of any crime. I was afraid I'd die in prison. I have heart disease—I have lost one eye—the other is going—the other is going! I knew I'd go blind in prison! God! God!"

Suddenly he began to sob. He rocked to and fro in hysteria, mumbling incomprehensibly. . . . Then with a abrupt jerk, he tore the glass ball from his eye-socket and hurled it down on the table before the judges in their black and gold. It bounced once

and then rolled glistening across the green velvet. . . .

"Look at me!" he howled . . . "Blind, Blind!" and with a twist of his fleshless neck, the old man turned toward the crowd that seethed under the white cavern of the nave a face so horrible that even the Carabinieri shuddered. The lacerated face of Sin! Blinded Sin! And swelling out of a whitewashed corner above, an effigy of Evil, medieval, grotesque, grinned down through the paint like a palid wraith of it!

Then the wretched creature pitched forward in a faint, and lay sprawling across the marble altar. . . .

Abbatemaggio laughed out shrilly . . . and all the dark creatures in the cage, like a single man, leaped to their feet and crowded down at an angle—black, slant shadows of hatred—hurling imprecations toward the informer. He sneered. . . . "Assassin! Assassin!" they howled . . . "*Assassine e tanta povere figl' e mamma*!". . . And meanwhile the Carabinieri were dragging away the limp form of Esposito. . . .

But the wheels of justice moved on, and the day ultimately arrived for the Carabinieri and their witnesses to take the stand against the Camorra. First Abbatemaggio testified before the Judges. It was about 5 *P. M.* when he was called, and the canvas above was grooved with bright yellow where the late

sun struck it. The excitement had been intensifying; but the informer himself, lolling calmly in his cage, betrayed not the least emotion, though Erricone, as the minutes passed, looked daggers at him, and Morra flashed lightnings from his one eye, while Padre Vitozzi murmured, "The Almighty have mercy on him!"

Finally the President began the interrogation. Abbatemaggio stood erect, his chest thrown out, as one who challenges the world. He spoke in a strong, clear voice, head in the air, eyes fixed on the vague white depths of the former sanctuary, marshalling his facts with close logic and supplementing the strength of his arguments with appropriate and often dramatic gestures. He described the whole organization of the Lower Camorra, the degrees of rank among its members, their plans and methods of working, and the system whereby they had been enabled to permeate almost every class of Neapolitan society. The accused glared at him with the most ineffable hatred. De Marinis smiled scornfully; Rapi made frequent signs of denial. . . .

Abbatemaggio evidently saw all this out of the corner of his eye, for he raised his voice and exclaimed; "I know what I am saying, as I was a most active member of the Camorra until 1907, and during that time participated in almost all of its most daring enterprises!" And while the shadows outside deepened into purple and the atmosphere of the court, like a sponge, began to absorb the inseep-

ing gloom, Abbatemaggio went on to describe a series of thefts and crimes, grotesque, horrible, quasi-oriental. . . . Just as the electric lights were turned on, springing the upper reaches of the church into golden prominence, Abbatemaggio reached the culminating point of his oration. Raising his hand on high, he summed up the Camorra in a single, curt definition: "It is an association of terror!"

Captain Fabbroni came to the stand on the sixty-fourth trial day. By this time several changes had taken place in the degraded church. Maria the poor "Beauty" was missing. A severe cold had developed into double pneumonia, and she was hovering between life and death in the municipal hospital. The priest also was in a bad way, but insisted on coming to court. All the prisoners' eyes were now perpetually startled like those of hunted beasts. Even the defence lawyers held that shifting terror-starred expression!

The court assembled in magnificent weather—and its effect hung variously over everyone. Raising his chin toward the cloudless blue, Don Ciro exclaimed, "And man deprives his brothers of God's free gifts!" At 9:30 President Bianchi entered. Immediately began the roll-call, the accused all answering, "Present," and Erricone adding, "unfortunately."

For ten days Fabbroni was to hold the center of the stage, to be followed by Cappezutti, Farris, and the minor Carabinieri. The aula was packed, and overflowing populace crowded the surrounding streets. At last the call came for Carlo Fab-

broni. Gray eyes flashing brilliantly, he walked up to the stand and stood, impressive and handsome, in his Captain's uniform.

Bowing to the Judges, the chief accuser began, "Excellency, and Gentlemen of the Jury! Allow me to make a rapid survey across the shadowy demesnes of this society which has so long held the metropolis of Italy in fee:

"First of all, I must repeat something undoubtedly well-known to most of you: The Neapolitan Camorra is no longer that of the time of the Viceroys, when the malefactor Gamur of Castille came over to found it. What we have before us at present is a thing that reaches its tentacles into the most shameful recesses of society. The old brotherhood with its rituals and code of honor, its bravery and chivalry, is ended forever. The mask of velvet has fallen down. The traditional dagger has been thrown away to rust in the scrap heap, and the insidious revolver taken its place . . . everywhere we find a metamorphosis, a change which has made the new society ten times more mysterious, more baffling, more impregnable. The old bravo swaggered through the streets of Naples and bowed, king-like, to the salutes of an admiring populace. Everyone knew him. The present-day Camorrist hides his identity under a veil of secrecy. He may not be known to his own fellow malefactor!

"And that is what has made it so difficult to strike a vital blow to this viscid, myriad-tentacled hydra.

. . . If we seek a vulnerable body like that of the Classical Camorra, we find merely a hollow vagueness, a shapeless shadow. . . .

"It appears distant and intangible . . . at times one almost wonders whether the whole Camorra is not a weird phantasm. But it exists in reality, Gentlemen of the Jury! The Camorra is very much alive, and infinitely more malignant, more poisonous, more insidious than ever before! Its virus seeps everywhere, into every class of society. It impedes justice, by the most secret and intangible means. It may appear distant, vague, shapeless, at first view . . . yet, let an honest functionary try to oppose his hand to this phantom enemy—and all at once he realizes that he has touched something vividly alive—and his life may be the price for such knowledge!

"This monstrous octopus, with its millions of tentacles, is mainly composed of a phalanx of persons who do not know one another, who would deny vehemently were we to mention their affiliation with the Camorra, who may not see one of the rumored chieftains twice in a year—and then only casually. . . . Yet these same persons—nobles some of them, politicians, functionaries—are just as much a part of the Camorra as are the criminals in that cage! We may talk of the *Higher* Camorra to which these office-holders belong, and of the *Lower* Camorra to which were affiliated the Cuocolos and their murderers . . . but the fact remains that the whole organization is a most virulent example of a world-

illness: of personal gain, of municipal corruption, of selfishness enthroned! . . . Conditions which exist everywhere have here in Naples reached a cankerous outbreak. Espionage pervades the city: no one knows who may be his friend or his enemy—except that, if he tries to go against the current of the Camorra, he soon finds himself in trouble. In his own interests, therefore, he is constrained to follow the crowd. And thus it is that we discover a new synonym for Camorra, namely: Self-interest!

"On searching well, however, we find that the organization, phantom though it may at first appear contains a clearly defined and tangible nucleus. This is the Lower Camorra: the criminal workers. To this belong Alfano, de Marinis, Rapi—to name a few most prominent ones. We have believed that, by cutting out this nucleus, we shall have destroyed the binding element in the whole organization, distant though the entire influence may ramify: through courts, Prefecture, Questura, and even Parliament! That is what we are seeking to do! That is the duty confronting us! It is not simply a matter of bringing the murderers of the Cuocolos to justice—it is a matter of cleansing an entire region, of giving our valued co-nationals of the south the opportunity to live their lives in a purer atmosphere, of annihilating the Camorra!"

A chorus of protest was loosened from the monstrous cage at this splendid exhordium . . . pandemonium reigned; insults in sebatic language

crossed one another. . . . Even the lawyers were shouting at the tops of their voices. . . . But eventually, with the aid of the Carabinieri, Judge Bianchi succeeded in restoring order, and Fabbroni continued. He now came to the issues at hand: to the Cuocolo murders. Fact followed on the heel of fact with military precision. Hearsay did not enter into his speech, as it had in the arguments of so many others. Everything was related first-hand. Each damning detail, each newly-welded link, represented the result of five years' effort and labor. Every statement was backed up by incontrovertible proof.

For days this continued, while the caged men remained listening in silent horror. One by one they were revealed in their true roles; one by one those responsible for the Cuocolo murders—the triumvirate Rapi, Alfano, de Marinis, and their hirelings —were shown forth in the scarlet light of their indubitable guilt. . . .

Cappezzutti followed, then Farris. It was the same story. Facts linked together with other facts. . . . Frantically, the defence attorneys searched for weak spots in their story, for possible rifts in the wall of testimony. There were none.

So the trial continued, day after day, week after week, month after month. Protagonists came and went. It now turned into a grueling war between lawyers and witnesses. Wild scenes there still were —scenes when the former church became a veri-

table bedlam. But no one could be deceived as to the underlying trend of the trial.

Winter came, and then a new year—and still the battle continued. An eternity of anguish was now written on the face of every principal in the prolonged struggle. A new spring arrived with its sunshine and azure skies . . . and still within the whitewashed church the Government and Camorra were locked in a death grapple.

Everyone was tired, everyone was satiated, everyone was wishing that he had never been drawn into the horrible maelstrom. . . .

On the eighth of July, 1912, almost sixteen months after the Trial had started, it was placed into the hands of the Jury. There had been over 280 sittings of the Court. Three of the forty-one originally accused had died, and 840 witnesses had been summoned, including 160 by Judge Bianchi for additional evidence. And, incidentally, the entire trial had cost the government one and a half million lire!

Forty-one lawyers had defended the Camorrists. Their cross-examination of Fabbroni during the grueling struggle, for instance, consumed eighteen sessions of the court. Several others of the prosecution's witnesses were kept on the stand almost as long. But Abbatemaggio they rather handled like a red-hot poker, shying clear of the wily little informer as far as feasible.

The pleading began in May 1912. The prose-

cutor in his flaming red, addressed the patient jury for fourteen consecutive sessions. Of the defending lawyers, one, Salomone, spoke for four days; another for five; while the great Neapolitan lawyer, Lioy, who had assumed the part of chief council for most of the Camorrists, spoke for twenty consecutive sessions.

While the Jury filed out, Rapi exclaimed savagely: "Hours of agony!"

Looking back over his shoulder, Don Ciro returned, "We shall be rewarded above for our sufferings here below, dear son!"

The *Mandriere* murmured, "For three nights I have dreamed of our release. . . ."

Erricone puckered his face. The scar on his cheek was almost black.

They did not have long to wait. After seven hours' deliberation the Jury announced that a verdict had been agreed upon. Gravely they filed back into their places. The usual court ritual was murmured between the clerk and the foreman of the Jury . . . and finally this latter pronounced the verdict:

"Guilty!"

There is little more to say: of the pandemonium that broke loose after that moment of electric suspense . . . of the hurricane of shrieks and yells that seemed to burst forth from every nook and cranny of the white building, of the last tragic scene that

marked the conclusion of this great Trial whose very warp seemed to have been spun from crimson-dyed stuffs of tragedy. On hearing of his condemnation de Marinis howled and drew out of his pocket a sharpened coin. Before a hand could be laid upon him, the frantic Camorrist slashed his throat and then collapsed in a pool of blood—this erstwhile political boss whose insult to the grand lady had drawn down the lightning! And while women shrieked and men shouted incoherently in their excitement, while Erricone struggled to clutch the coin in order to cut his own throat, while the priest Vitozzi swayed back and forth on his chair, and Maria the "Beauty" remained in a swoon, her body crumpled in a corner of the monstrous cage and her golden hair dishevelled among the bars, Judge Bianchi arose, and, making signs to the Carabinieri that they try to restore order, retired into his private chamber in order to consider the sentences.

It was dark when the Judge reentered. In the illuminated church the crowd sat silently now, save for an occasional moan which escaped from the ghastly cage. A calm of utter despair seemed to have passed over most of the Camorrists at the realization that the entire struggle was ended now, that there was no longer any hope. And hardly a word was raised in protest as the Judge, in a coldly calculated voice pronounced the sentences—the limit allowed by Italian law, there being no death penalty:

To the chieftains, Erricone, Rapi, de Marinis, together with their hirelings, Morra, Sortino, Salvi, Cerrato and de Gennaro, were given thirty years of *solitary* confinement—a punishment of which few ever expiate ten years without either dying or going insane. De Matteo received twenty years' imprisonment; Ascrittore ten years; and Vitozzi seven years! The others had all been found guilty of criminal association; but as their past five years of imprisonment more than covered the sentences allowed by law, they were set free, though only nominally—for they were to remain thereafter under the strictest police surveillance!

Thus was the door closed upon a past epoch. Years have rolled by; several of the imprisoned Camorrists have died. Their friends on the outside have practically all disappeared from the world in which they once held such powers. Meanwhile a world war, following closely upon the heels of the Great Trial, has completed the final vanishing of the Camorra. The Neapolitans have ever been a great people—this race blent out of Greek and Roman. Ancient Parthenope kept its proud Dorian identity till late in the Roman empire. Then fell dark days upon the southern littoral, centuries of servitude to foreign despots, of misgovernment, of oppression. A natural result of these conditions was the Camorra. And the passing of the ancient society has meant the final summing up of that medieval epoch. The

Naples of to-day is a new Naples. The rare natural gifts of its populace, diverted into proper channels, are now bearing forth a fruit of surprising richness. The Neapolitan is naturally poetic; and even in the old unhappy days, the black-sheep of the city, the Camorrists, wove a veil of poetry around their misguided lives. They built up their own system of chivalry—mistaken, it is true, but sincere. Their fine ancestry was ever cropping out. Even in crime, they were poets!

THE END

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